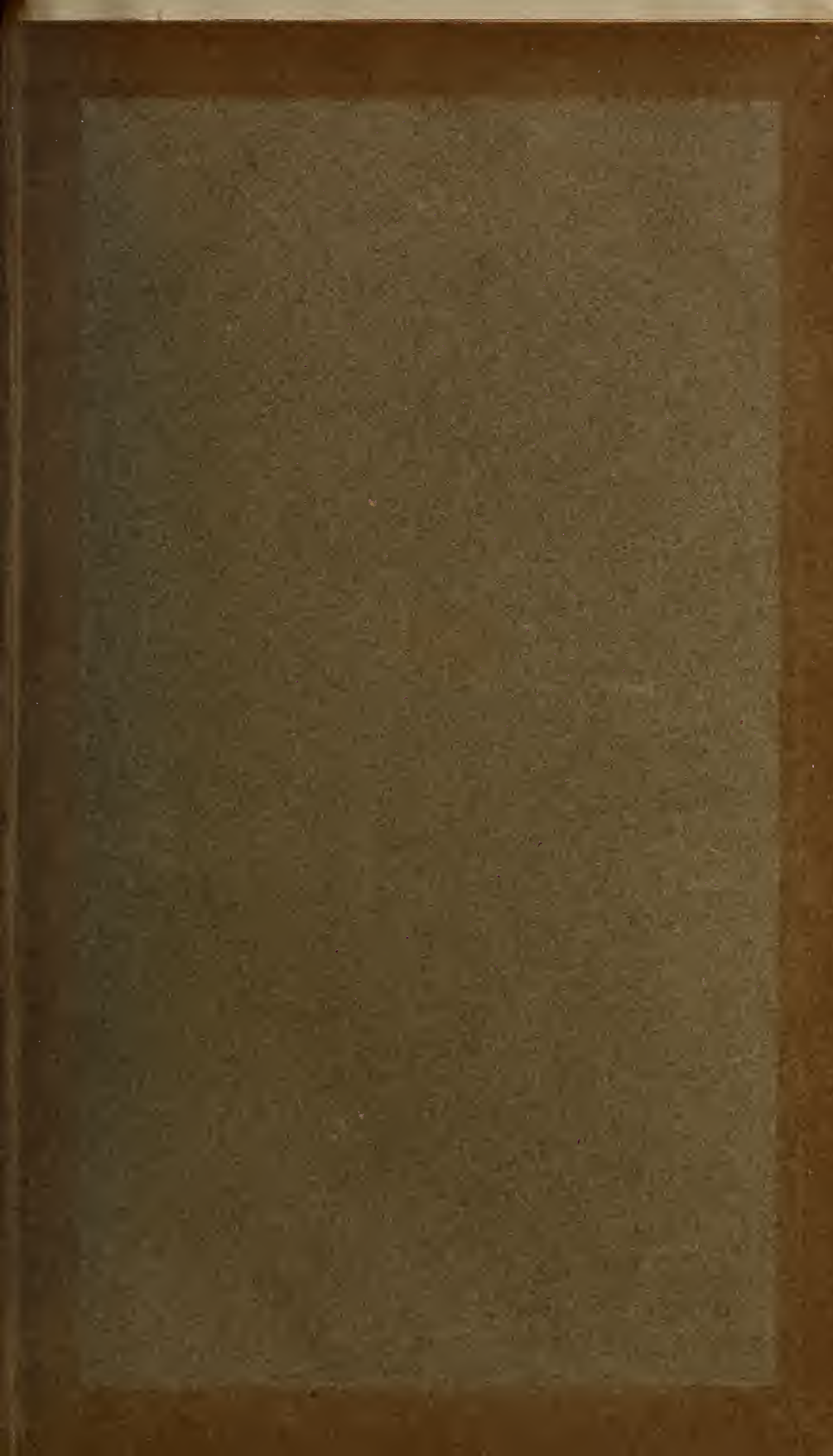




F. E. M. B. C.



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THE
TRAGEDIES
AND
POEMS
OF
FREDERICK EARL OF CARLISLE,
KNIGHT OF THE GARTER,
&c. &c. &c.



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PROLOGUE.

*IN ancient times, when Edward's conquering son,
O'er prostrate France his glorious course had run ;
'Midst clashing arms, and 'midst the din of war,
Meek Science follow'd not the Victor's car.
Though Gower and Chaucer knelt before her shrine,
And woo'd, on British ground, the tuneful Nine,
Yet she, to climes congenial to her soul,
Fled from our chilling blasts, and northern pole.
'Twas there she waved her universal wand,
And led, o'er classic fields, her learned band ;
There, as a model to this distant age,
With language pure adorn'd Boccacio's page.
While all around us here was cold and dark,
While chieftain dunces set their peasant mark,
The Muse was stringing Dante's sounding shell,
Bade him, inspired, of things sublime to tell,
And, to his proud demand, expanded heaven and hell ;
O'er the soft lute taught Petrarch's hand to move,
And give his years to sweetest song, and love.*

*Yet here, though late, when milder life began
To spread its influence, and to soften man ;*

PROLOGUE.

*When, as the castle sunk, the rampart fell,
And struggling reason burst the monkish cell,
Young Industry rush'd forth, the desert smiled,
And Ceres triumph'd o'er the heathy wild.
Hither the Muse would sometimes bend her way,
Willing to loiter, but afraid to stay;
Until bright spirits of ethereal fire
Raised the charm'd note, and waked the British lyre,
Shakspeare and Milton! Listening to their lays,
How soon unfelt were Albion's clouded days.
Pleased, too, she follow'd where her Cowley led,
O'er Waller's tongue her choicest honey spread,
Nor let that garland fade she wove for Spenser's head.*

*These knew to tempt her stay;—from soil she loved,
Hither her plants, and favourite flowers removed;
Taught the sweet sounds that roll'd o'er Arno's wave,
Again to vibrate in their Thames's cave.*

*Such sacred labours to pursue with care,
Dryden, to all their skill and science heir,
Caught from their mighty hands the magic power,
And fix'd her empire on Britannia's shore.
He, from Italia's fount, would frequent bring
The dismal tale, the tender heart to wring;
Each stormy passion of the breast to move,
By Guiscard's fate, and Sigismonda's love.
If, following him, a Bard should dare explore,
And search that mine which had been pierced before;*

PROLOGUE.

*If, on the Stage, he now presumes to shew,
By such great masters touch'd, dark crimes and woe ;
The bold attempt forgive, the Poet spare,
Nor, though you wept before, deny the tear.
And if, in varied form, and order new,
He brings again the wretched to your view,
'Tis to those masters but fresh worship paid,
And added incense on their altars laid.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TANCRED.

ARCHBISHOP OF SALERNO.

MANFRED, PRINCE OF BENEVENTO.

GUISCARD.

MONFORTI.

HASSAN.

ANSELMO.

BENDER.

RAIMOND.

WOMEN.

SIGISMONDA.

SIBILLA.

SCENE, SALERNO.



THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.

ACT I.



THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A CLOISTER IN THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, OPENING IN
FRONT TO A DISTANT VIEW OF MOUNT VESUVIUS. A
FLIGHT OF STEPS ON THE SIDE LEADING TO THE CHAPEL.
THE ORGAN AND VOICES ARE HEARD FROM WITHIN.

*Enter the Archbishop, Anselmo, and Monks, in
procession.*

ARCHBISHOP.

MOVE forward to the chapel—you, Anselmo,
Remain with me—I'll speedily attend you ;
For yet cold age must not retard my duty.

[Exeunt all but the Archbishop and Anselmo.]
Fearless of death, and careless when ye hide
These wearied bones beneath your holy pavement,
Too weak to struggle for an injured people,
And rush between my brother's wrath and them,

What charm has life for me ! I view the bourn,
Its welcome limitation, and fain would,
Fatigued, worn down, shape a near course to-
wards it.

Ansel. What means my lord? On that un-
ruffled brow,
By holy patience smooth'd, I ne'er beheld
Such marks of rooted care.

Archb. Alas ! Anselmo,
Little thou know'st the horrors of last night !
Terrors are surely made for guilt : you'd think
That Virtue would, like our tall Pharos, stand,
Which spurns the waves that dash in vain below,
And, midst the war of jarring elements,
Maintains its pure and salutary light.
Yet, tho' in peace with God and man, when late
I laid me down to take a short repose,
Fears, I'm ashamed to own, did banish sleep.
Almighty powers ! what must the accursed feel,
The shrouded murderer at his final doom,
When, bursting from his charnel-house, he meets
The accusing angel? He, alas ! weigh'd down
With the foul burden of repeated sin ;
I, wash'd from guilt, and blameless : Yet I felt

Horror past utterance ; the pealing noises
Still din upon my ear.

Ansel. Most reverend father,
It was my duty, all the livelong night,
To watch before our altar. Solemn stillness
Hush'd the whole convent ; e'en Vesuvius,
In dying thunders, seem'd to court repose.

Archb. Anselmo, mark my words, and I beseech thee,
Think not 'twas dotage wove this airy vision.
A thousand footsteps seem'd in haste to pass
Close by my chamber door :—strange whisperings—
Then horrid shrieks :—and some, methought, did laugh ;

But with a mirth so terrible, the groans
Which follow'd e'en gave respite to my fears.
A hollow voice upon my brother call'd,
And, in the tumult, Sigismonda's name
Struck on my ear. I started from my bed,
And, by a hand invisible impell'd,
Through these lone mansions of the dead, survey'd
That royal tomb, exposing, in sad show,
The nauseous remnants of all worldly grandeur,

And gaping wide in sad expectancy
Of some new victim from our falling house.—
—Hadst thou, Anselmo, in that hour beheld me
Sinking to earth, thou surely would'st have deem'd
Some foul and secret guilt had bade these terrors
Brood o'er my sleepless head.

Ansel. O no, my master,—
Is not that restless angel Charity
Ever on wing for thee, midst lonely streets,
And solitary places, in her search
To give new objects to thy endless bounty;
To bear with thee to Misery's humble dwelling
Peace and sweet comfort, and unloose with thee
The chain of captive innocence and virtue?

Archb. O that proud-hearted men but once
could know

The penetrating throb, one generous pang
Of the breast heaving at the poor man's blessing,
Or at the ill-articulated thanks
Of modest worth relieved! Would they not own
That love, ambition, grandeur, wealth, and power,
Only amuse them with the names of pleasures,
Play with the senses, trifle with the passions,
And mock them with the semblance of delight!

Little the merit in the willing offer
Of my best services, but in the omission
Real offence and shame. — What mean these
shouts?

Enter an Attendant.

Att. Manfred's victorious fleet, with Pagan
spoil,
Now makes Salerno's harbour. The glad people
Rush to the shores, impatient to behold
Those gallant leaders, by whose righteous arms
All Syria bends before our holy cross.

Archb. They are most welcome. But how
wears the morn?

Ansel. So quick, that, ere our rites shall be per-
form'd,
Your brother's crowded palace will receive
The adulating herd, prepared to light
Their pois'nous incense on his natal day,
Striving who first shall change the rising curse
Into base flattery, and impious worship.

Archb. You do forget he was great William's son.

Ansel. In truth I do: I would that Tancred's
virtues

Would oftener call that God-like hero back !
'Tis better to forget those happier days ;
Our people's chains sit lighter, when they cease
To dream of freedom past : the night of hell
Was doubly black to the rebellious angels,
Because they once had shared the radiant blaze
Of heaven's eternal day.

Archb. You're too severe ;
Yet I will own that brooding discontent
Casts a sad gloom amongst us, and I fear
My brother fails in his harsh scheme of rule,
Nor leads his people through so smooth'd a way,
As would a child clothed in gentleness,
Beckoning them where to follow. In our streets,
I've trembled to behold his subjects meet,
Each, by his look and gesture, fathoming
The other's will ; reading each others thoughts ;
Then, with their eyes cast up, they witness heaven
To some strong oath ; and altogether grasp
Their ready swords, abruptly finishing
The ambiguous conference.

Ansel. This is too true ;
Tancred, I trust, is still secure from danger ;
For, without conduct, secrecy, and caution,

The people's rage, like an old warrior's dart,
Falls short, and only marks the bold intent.
They have no chief, nor is there one amongst them
To whose authority they dare commit
The enterprising hour assign'd to vengeance;
Fear not the vain attempt.

Archb. I fear it not,
But arm my breast with confidence in heaven.
He who can quell the fury of yon mountain,
When from the molten stream of liquid fire
The astonish'd deep shrinks back, 'tis he alone
Can bend and soften Tancred's iron sceptre,
Disarm a furious people of their rage,
And ward the impending dangers that await us.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A VIEW OF THE PORT OF SALERNO.

Manfred, Guiscard, Slaves, Attendants.

Manf. Welcome, my Guiscard, to thy native
land!

When, from our ship, we first Salerno spied,

I could at times perceive the glow of life
Fade in thy cheek, and then return again.

Guis. Well, well, my lord, I freely own the
sight

Of this loved country did affect me greatly.
You mark'd how from the mast a captive Turk,
With a loud shout, proclaim'd the lengthening
shore.

If fortune frown'd upon his early youth,
When fighting bravely he became my slave,
Yet for the boy she had a smile in store;—
I gave him, for that shout, his liberty.

Manf. 'Twas like thy generous nature. True
compassion

Attends the soldier to the embattled field.
And, in the din of roaring war, she sues
For bleeding youth, and shields exhausted age.
But now, my Guiscard, (how the thought afflicts
me!)

I must resign thee, as by promise bound,
To Tancred's earlier right. He lent thee to me,
And I must give thee back: with joy he'll hear,
That his young soldier was the first to plant
Our holy standard on the Syrian walls.

Guisc. Could I do less than follow thee? The
price

Of glorious danger was thy envied praise.
'Twas at thy side, in the long waving shadow
Of those black plumes, I first by thee was taught
To stain my novice sword in Pagan gore.

Manf. And well you proved its edge.—And
yet, my Guiscard,

Thus sever'd, never more must we again,
Roused by the neighing of impatient steeds
Rattling their iron harness, bear together
The dreadful vengeance of our righteous swords
Up to Norredin's throne? Shall these bright arms,
This batter'd casque and shield, this well-tried
lance,

Serve only, hanging in our castle halls,
To damp the joys of feast and revelry;
And, as we eye them, draw from our full hearts
The sigh of shame, to view them useless there,
Upbraiding our cold spirits?—

Guisc. O! my prince,
Such words distract my soul: the aguish frame,
The sleepy blood of cowards may require
Such stimulating med'cine; to the brave

'Tis poison, lights up madness in the brain,
And forces sense and reason from their seats.
Raise but thy standard in an honest cause,
Thy honour injured, and our cross insulted,
If Guiscard is not canopied the first
Beneath its sacred shade, may dastard fear
Unstring his sinews in the day of battle;
Or, if he fall, may not one virtuous wound,
Plain in his bosom, plead for his interment !

Manf. Guiscard, I doubt thee not ; but will
not Tancred,

Though honour calls, detain thee from the field,
While thy fair fame shall bleed, a sacrifice
To his false kindness and pernicious love ?

Guisc. Tancred has ever loved me ; can I
think

He would debase me so ? In early years
Inured to arms, he knows that youthful courage,
Ev'n as a pinion'd eagle sits and frets,
Will pine and sicken in inglorious ease.

SCENE III.

Enter Bender.

Bend. [*to Guisc.*] A Turk, to whom, in pity
of his age,

You gave permission to ascend our bark,
Demands a moment's audience.

Guisc. Tell him, Bender,
I must attend the prince.

Bend. Alas ! my master,
(I love the name, and thus must ever call you)
This poor old man has never ceased to grieve,
Since first we sail'd. There was a dignity
In his grave sorrows, that our roughest sea-boys,
With folded arms and sympathizing silence,
Wept as he wept, unconscious of the tears
That glisten'd on their sun-burnt cheeks :—you
cannot

Refuse this comfort to afflicted age.

Guisc. Cold is the winter of our closing days ;
The cheerful blaze, which ease and affluence light
In that hard season, cannot drive its heat

Through the iced channel of our veins ; alas,
If penury is added, then, indeed,
The imbitter'd cup runs o'er. Know you his
business ?

Requires it quick dispatch ?

Bend. All that I learn

Is, that to Tancred you must be his suitor.

Guisc. Does he attend ? Say, is he near at
hand ?

Bend. He still remains on board ; our fleet is
moor'd

Near to that point ; I fly to bring him to you.

[*Exit Bender.*

SCENE IV.

Manfred, Guiscard.

Guisc. 'Tis said, that Nature has not form'd
the heart

Of Tancred of her softest clay : in me

Behold an instance of his clemency.

Where Reggio's rocky cliffs the surge defy,

There was I found, inhumanly exposed,

(By whom, and whence, uncertain) there I lay
An infant helpless, in my cradle pent,
Left to the mercy of a rising sea.

'Twas in that season, in this perilous state,
Tancred espied me as he chanced to pass,
Just as the favouring tide, by Heaven directed,
Heaved me on shore. My plaintive cries so
moved

Salerno's prince, that carefully, in his robe,
He wrapt me round, and bore me to his palace ;
Where, from that moment, I have ever shared
His fatherly affection.

Manf. 'Tis most strange,
That on thy head the shower of Tancred's kind-
ness

Should all be spent, and not a stream of pity
Left to assuage his people's sufferings ;
That he, accusom'd to the piercing shrieks
Of tortured criminals, should turn aside
To thee, and let thy childish eloquence
Invade a breast so fenced against compassion.

Guis. Imperious in his nature, wrong'd by
those
Whom he most trusts, instructed from his youth

To esteem the people but as instruments
Of his ambition, or capricious will,
Yet, sir, believe me, Tancred still has virtues,
Which might in public blaze, but are obscured
By the dim clouds of passion that eclipse them,
And intercept their lustre from mankind.

Manf. 'Tis true, indeed, he rears that tender
plant,

His beauteous daughter, with unwearied care,
In spotless innocence, and purest virtue ;
Ne'er has he suffer'd the infectious gale
Of vice to breathe upon her tender ear :
In this, he shews a softness in his nature
That almost blunts the dart of accusation.

Guisc. Named you his daughter, lovely Sigis-
monda ?

O ! I have seen him sit and gaze upon her,
Till down his manly cheeks the scorching tears
Have flow'd so fast, that on his iron corselet
Were mark'd their rusty channels. Innocence
Like her's is watch'd by all the host of angels ;
The fiends of this licentious court obey
The fascination of her eyes, though meek
As gentle Mercy's at the throne of Heaven.

Manf. And the soft graces of her outward form
Keep equal pace with all her soul's perfections.

Guisc. The amorous winds, sure, never in
their sport,
From such a forehead stirr'd the waving tresses,
To give more beauty to the gazing world.

Manf. But you, my Guiscard, witness to the
spring
When first these beauties budded to the morn,
Arm'd with its gentler warmth, and gradual
fires,
Faint not like those that feel the summer's gleam.

Guisc. [*aside.*] Ah! that in truth it were so!
—But behold
The minister of Tancred, with his train.

SCENE V.

Enter Monforti, Raimond, Guards, Attendants, &c.

Monf. Great prince, the firm supporter of our
cross,
Religion's boast, ordain'd by Heav'n the scourge

Of Mahomet's proud sons, imperial Tancred,
With open arms, and never-ceasing friendship,
Greets your arrival.—And to you, young warrior,
[to Guiscard.

Pleased with the embassy, I am charged to bear
A father's welcome from our gracious lord

Guisc. His goodness overcomes me.

Manf. Say, if health

Still crowns your royal master's honour'd age,
And adds new beauties to his lovely daughter?

Monf. Prop of his age, and solace of his toils,
She knows to smooth each hidden festering care
That drags the worn-out body to the tomb.

She sits at his full board like Health's young
goddeffs,

And, from the sickening feast, and poisonous
revel,

Charms him to temperate slumbers; it should
seem

That age, in pity to her pious cares,
Meant not to touch the venerable fabric,
But leave it unimpair'd for ever.

Guisc. Guard her,

Ye angels, and ye saints! Let no foul weed

Rear its dark leaves among the flowers that
paint

Her youthful way! O! may she still continue
The envy of her sex, the joy of ours,

The pattern of an imitating world! [*Aside.*

Manf. To our brave knights, who, from the
Holy Land,

Have follow'd me, their chief, bear these my
wishes;

That each, with due attention, do observe

The conduct of their vassals, ever mindful

We are no longer 'midst the plunder'd walls

Of sack'd Aleppo; each in that strict guise

Himself demeaning, as should best become

The gallant wearer of that blushing cross

Which beams upon his mail.—Guiscard, be this

Thy care, and then rejoin me at the palace.

[*Exeunt Manfred, Monforti, &c.*

SCENE VI.

Enter Bender to Guiscard.

Guisc. Say, Bender, does the Turk attend?

Bend. He does.

Guisc. Inform him of my haste, and lead him
hither.

Re-enter Bender, with Hassan.

Hass. Young soldier, if I am rightly taught,
you share
The prince's confidence.

Guisc. Too certain envy
Attends a favourite's lot: I'm grieved to hear
That I am so esteem'd. Tell me, can I,
My honour safe, with strict regard to justice,
Serve thee, old man?

Hass. Thou can'st; let but my fate
On these depend, and I am safe. To Tancred
Deliver this; know, 'tis a dreadful web,
Wrought in the loom of anguish and despair:
If, with a favouring eye, he views the tale,
I shall be found to thank you—but if not—

Guis. If not—what then?

Hass. No matter—from those walls
Each friendly eye is watching this delay.—
My life is in thy hands. *[Exit Hassan.]*

Guis. I know not whether
His honest bluntness wins me to his cause,
Or there is something in his air and voice,
Which has so quickly changed a cold compliance
Into the warmest zeal to do him service. *[Exeunt.]*

THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.



ACT II.

ACT II. SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN TANCRED'S PALACE.

*Enter Tancred, Manfred, Guiscard, Monforti,
Raimond, Guards, &c.*

Tanc. Gods! how seducing is the breath of
Fame!—

The very winds that pass'd o'er Syria's plains
Were but your messengers, to scatter round
The wondering land the terrors of your name :
O now I feel my years—once, from the backs
Of pressing hosts, I'd vaulted like this boy
[turning to Guiscard.

O'er foss and battlement.—But now, alas—

Manf. Shipwreck'd by many a boisterous
storm of life,

Tancred may sure his votive tablet hang
In the still temple of rewarding Peace.
Has not the God of War placed round those brows
The last full chaplet of progressive honours?
Receive that glorious meed which few attain.

Guisc. The war-worn standard, waving o'er
the dust

Of other heroes, who have fought like thee,
The long inscription of their godlike actions,
Teaching us how they bled, and where they fell,
The envied victims to their country's safety,
Light as they may the sparks of martial fury,
Or wring our hearts with sorrow; yet the
groans,

The tears of millions, on their cold heads fall
Unnoticed, and unthank'd. Reflect, O Tancred,
How glorious, and how rare, the lot of those
Who have, like thee, walk'd hand in hand with
death,

To whom 'tis given, in the calm vale of ease,
To unrivet their bright mail, and there receive
The full reward of virtue and renown.

Tanc. There are, I know, so basely cast, who'd
spin

Their mortal thread, till, worn by lingering time,
'Tis fretted to a hair. A soldier's life
Is only measured by its course of glory:
That past, who would be left the mockery
Of slaves, the babbling bed-rid jest of women?—

Just Heaven avert such shame!—No more of
this.—

Salerno's custom dedicates this day
To glad festivity and sport. And see,
The morning-star which ushers in our joy,
The lovely Sigismonda!—

SCENE II.

Enter Sigismonda and Sibilla.

Sigis. Health, and Content

The soul's sweet comforter, whate'er can smooth
And solace age, wait on my dearest father!
Through the revolving year, may all his hours,
Like the mix'd colours of the rainbow's arch,
Unite and flow together; only varied
By the bright change of fresh succeeding joys!
May Sigismonda long, O long, be suffer'd,
Borne on the wings of duty and of love,
Thus, thus to light on her fond father's bosom!

Tanc. And, for this single blessing which is
left me,

To press thee to it, life is worth a prayer.

Forgive this weakness,—ye too may have children,
[*to Manfred and Guiscard.*

Who will so twine themselves, and cling about
Your hearts, that ye will wonder how fond Nature

Should vanquish all the manly pride within you,
And make you dote as I do.—O my child,
Long as these eyes, unveil'd with clouds, may
gaze

Upon thee ; long as my dull'd hearing wakes
To that enchanting voice, a little sunshine
Still faintly trembles on my evening landscape.—

But see, my daughter, Manfred has restored
Our Guiscard, rich in honours and in spoils.

Can Sigismonda call to mind, as once
I told her how I found this orphan, dancing
On the rough billows in his cradle vessel,

She wept, and thought I mock'd her, when I
bade

Her lisping tongue no longer call him brother.

Sigis. O happy ignorance ! dear childish
vision !

Had ye, bless'd powers, but still prolong'd the
cheat ! [Aside.]

Manfred, accept my thanks, a sister's thanks
I may not call them; those fond dreams are o'er;
That you, who taught him all the ways of glory,
Till round our cross he bound the wreath of conquest;

Yet have not left him a poor mangled corse,
A prey to vultures, where he fought so well.

Guisc. Down, down thou busy heart. [*aside.*]

—What can I say!

All language is too weak; words are but shadows,

The feeble outlines of our thoughts!—I sink
Beneath the weight of joy and gratitude.

Tanc. Come, these unmeaning speeches are
the growth

Of Asiatic softness,—fit for slaves.—

The morning wears:—my brother was not wont
To be thus tardy in his salutations;—
This absence might impeach his love.

Manf. Great sir,

Consider how far distant is his palace;
The crowded streets may interrupt his train.

Tanc. Those humble saints, o'er whose devoted
bones

We bend, were not impeded in their way
By the meandring of a monk's procession :
Their mules were not weigh'd down with golden
trappings,
But nimbly moved beneath their easier load.
They had no censers to perfume the air,
Extinguishing the morning fragrance, nor
Bore they their diamond crosiers through the
streets,
To mock the sun, and give a prouder day.
Manf. 'Tis by such pomp your brother means
to honour
The morn which gave you birth.

SCENE III.

Enter Anselmo.

Ansel. My holy master,
With serious thoughts and cares oppress'd, that
make
Tumultuous noise, and the loud people's joy,
Sad music to his harass'd senses, prays
He may withhold his brotherly embrace,

Until an hour more suited to his temper
Admit him to your privacy.

Tanc. He is
For ever full of needless cares. Know'st thou
This urgent business, whose intruding form
Would mar the day's festivity? For this—
Be it as seems him best.—Do you, Monforti,
The sports being ended, by the private way
Conduct him to us.

Ansel. —And till then, each blessing
That pure Religion can call down from Heaven,
With unremitted vows for Tancred's safety,
He fervently invokes.

Tanc. Lead to the square ;
The stagnant mist that hangs upon the cloister
Must not obscure the splendour of this day.

[Exeunt all but Monforti and Raimond.]

SCENE IV.

Monf. Hast thou, throughout this murmuring
city, spread
The hopes of vengeance, and redress of wrongs?

Raim. The leafless oak, crumbling to dust
with age,
Fires not so quickly in the lightning's course,
As our brave citizens, whene'er I point
The path to great revenge.

Monf. Say, hast thou ventured
To hint that I partake their just resentments,
Approve their rage, and weep at their oppression?

Raim. I even whisper'd, you would not be
wanting
To guide them through the danger.

Monf. The gull'd fools
Believe I love them. They are, indeed, the waves,
And, while they bear us, we must court their
favour,
Until we gain the port; unheeded then,
To the wide ocean they again may flow,
Lost and forgotten midst their kindred waters.

Raim. You will admit the leaders to your
presence?

Monf. We'll meet this night.

Raim. And why so late, when darkness,
That precious cloak of mischief, should be worn

For execution?—Day-light is for council:
We want the sun, with all his beams, to read
If the firm soul recoils not in dismay,
At the loud thunder of the boasting lip.
The favouring night can better be employ'd
Than in cold conference.

Monf. This very night?

Raim. The prostituted voice of hireling crowds
Charms to more death-like sleep a tyrant's senses
Than Hermes' fabled rod, or all the juice
Of Anatolian poppies. His guards, too,
Will be all hush'd, and drown'd in wine; to-morrow

We may salute thee monarch of this land;
Tancred in chains, and haughty Sigismonda
Repaying all thy sufferings with her charms.

Monf. What! Sigismonda? And shall that
proud beauty

Then deign to purchase with her lovely self,
A respite for her father's life? Great Gods,
How glorious is the thought! Come, fierce Ambition,

And slighted Love, come arm my desperate
hands,

And, in the horrors of the midnight gloom,
Steel my firm soul 'gainst pity or remorse !
Yet be we careful of the powers, this morn
Arrived with Manfred.

Raim. Sir, be that my care :
Their chiefs are lodged within the town ; with
ease

We may secure their persons.

Monf. Two hours hence,
In the long gallery which o'erhangs the river,
Deserted since the death of Tancred's queen,
(You know the secret door,) the chosen band
Shall there be taught their lesson.—Now fare-
well ! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

Sigismonda and Sibilla.

Sibil. Why does my mistress seek this lone
retreat ?
The knights are all in steel ; you know whose
hands
Must place the laurel on the champion's head.

Your father ill will brook this want of duty,
And think you do not share the general joy :
O ! tempt not his displeasure.

Sigis. No, Sibilla,
'Twas fearing his displeasure, that I left him.

Sibil. It is your absence, that will move his
anger.

Sigis. My presence rather might excite his
care.

Sibil. What mean those eyes of grief?

Sigis. O, was it fit
Those eyes should meet my father's searching
glance?

Sibil. I understand you not.

Sigis. Thy ignorance
Tells me, Sibilla, I am not betray'd.
And may I trust thee? This oppressive load
That bends my heart, grows heavier every hour;
'Tis thou must help me to support its weight.

Sibil. Can Sigismonda doubt my secresy?

Sigis. O, secresy, thou common household god,
Received by all, but worship'd by how few !
What, though in chains thou bind'st the captive
tongue,

That dangerous foe subdued, how many more
Hast thou to conquer yet,—imprudent blushes,
Expressive throbbings, and revealing eyes!

A single look consigns a virgin's fame
To endless censure, and the public scorn.

Yet I will trust thee:—Hast thou, then, observed

That this poor breast e'er harbour'd aught but
ease,

And calm tranquillity?

Sibil. To me it seem'd
The seat of mild serenity.

Sigis. That's well;
O were it ever such! And yet, my friend,
The hall of Æolus, when, from their chambers,
The fierce winds meet to rush upon the world,
Is not distracted with such various rage
As this sad bosom. Here Religion's fire,
Here female pride, and filial duty strive;
Here virgin modesty, and raging love,
Contend for empire.

Sibil. Am I in a dream?
Love, did'st thou say?—for whom?

Sigis. Ah! my Sibilla,

And can'st thou ask?—Can there be more than one?

Are there two Guiscards to undo our sex?

Sibil. Guiscard!—if e'er thine eyes in tenderness

Were cast on him, suspicion never yet
Pursued the secret glance.

Sigis. That, too, is well:

But yet methinks 'tis wonderful, Sibilla,

That jealousy ne'er set its spies on me;

For, have I not a watching, hating rival,

In every beauty that adorns this court?

Who, who can gaze on Guiscard, and not love?

Is he not all that Heathen fiction drew?

For, let him snatch the silver lyre and bow,

O he is lovely as the God of Day.

If thou would'st view the wondrous charms, that
caused

The wife of Theseus to forget her woe,

Bid Guiscard round his ruddy temples twine

The vine's curl'd tendril.—Who can still deny

That heavenly spirits take the form of men,

And triumph as they will?

Sibil. Ah! calm these transports;

If the warm air of a suspicious sigh
Should light on Tancred's ear, too well thou
know'st

How rudely he would tear the secret from thee.
Compose that ruffled look, rejoin your father;—
Till you approach him, leave me to excuse
This strange delay. [*Exit Sibilla.*

SCENE VI.

Enter Guiscard.

Guisc. Princess, I plead
Your father's orders for this boldness; anxious
He seeks the cause of Sigismonda's absence.

Sigis. Guiscard, that cause Tancred must
never know.

Guisc. And may I profit of this golden hour?—
Again renew my vows? But you are silent:—
Perhaps 'tis me you shun.—Ah! Sigismonda,
Tell me, O tell me, if perfidious Love
Ne'er yet has taught those roving eyes to turn
To some more favour'd youth, to light in him
The scorching blaze of love, driving him mad,

Like me. A whole eventful year hath pass'd,
A livelong year hath roll'd its various course,
Since, to our lessening bark, from yonder point,
With your loose veil you waved a long farewell.
Fool that I was, to think the wind, that blew
From shore, came fraught with constancy and
truth,

And, warm from those enchanting lips, convey'd
The vow of faith and ever-during love !

Sigis. Alas, have I not more to fear than thou?
A youthful conqueror in a land of beauty !
Each female trick and artifice employ'd
To vanquish him who had subdued their country :
And could I hope these little charms would shield
My Guiscard's bosom 'gainst such dangerous
shafts !

Guisc. Transporting words ! O ! 'twas thy
lovely form

That floated round me wheresoe'er I went.
It trod on the light surge ; the silent moon
Was conscious of our fond discourse ; whole
nights,

As in the trenches thou hast watch'd beside me,
I've held sweet converse with thee, 'till the camp,

Roused at the morn, hath scared thy fluttering
spirit,

Destroy'd the dream, and left me to despair.

Sigis. Dost thou remember, Guiscard, it was
near

This very spot, that we together read
Of two young lovers who scarce knew they
loved;

(Two infant flowers, that, like us, had grown
In the same border,) when a sudden blush
At the same instant seized our guilty cheeks;
Alike our trembling tongues refused their office,
The book was flung aside,—we both retired,
Fearful to meet each other's conscious eyes.

Guisc. Forget that hour!—that all-revealing
blush!—

Here they are chisel'd, Love's eternal work,
Beyond the reach of Time's erasing hand.

Sigis. But yet, my Guiscard—

Guisc. Why, O Sigismonda,
That rising sigh?

Sigis. My joy at seeing thee
A little had dispersed the clouds around me:
Joy, like a meteor in a wintry night,

Brighten'd the landscape for a moment ; now
All is forlorn again, dismay, and terror.

Guisc. Thou hast a soul superior to thy sex ;
In thee, proud man's perfections all unite :
No common cause demands that look of care.

Sigis. I have no tears to give to needless woe ;
Imaginary sorrows flutter round
The mansions of the happy, but pass by
The gate that's watch'd by real misery :
When next we meet, prepare thy soul to bend,
Prepare to yield, where madness must obey.

Guisc. Am I not bless'd beyond my warmest
wish?—

True to thy faith—

Sigis. Guiscard, my boding heart
Informs me—but ere long dread certainty
Will take the place of miserable doubt ;
Till then be patient.—Soon, I fear, the sun
Of all our happiness must set for ever !

[*Exeunt.*

THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.

ACT III.

ACT III. SCENE I.

TANCRED'S PALACE.

*Tancred, Archbishop, Guiscard.**Tanc.* [with Hassan's petition in his hand.]

No—he refused us homage, and denied
Himself a vassal ; from his towers display'd
Rebellion's standard, and against our arms
Let down his strong portcullis of defiance.

Guisc. His sufferings, sure—

Tanc. He was so proud a traitor,
He never sued for mercy, though his walls
Were level with the earth ; we found him sit-
ting

Amidst a heap of fallen followers,
Contemplating his sad work ; he scarce deign'd
To utter word, till scornfully he bade me
Finish the scene, a place of honour yet
Remain'd for him upon that bloody couch.

Archb. And did that courage, that contempt
of death,

That spirit unsubdued, that noble pride,
Excite your anger? You had then a moment,
Heaven's choicest gift, doubly to overcome,
First by your sword, and then by your forgive-
ness.

Guisc. Think, that, in twenty years of misery,
Of abject servitude, his soul has bow'd
To the harsh orders of a foreign master;
His silver head, uncover'd through the waste,
Has felt the scorching dog-star; and his hands,
Ill suited to the slavish toil, have led
The burthen'd camel through the tedious way.
How changed from him, lord of a proud domain,
Slaves at his nod, and plenty at his board;
Where nightly revel lit its festive taper,
Mirth's hospitable beacon, to call in
The wandering knight, and pilgrim, to his hall!
All now is desolation.

Tanc. Mark me, boy,
If, lingering in these walls, to-morrow's sun
O'ertake the slave, that moment is his last.
Inform the traitor of our fix'd resolves.

Begone—How's this? What! am I not obey'd?
Why does he thus unwillingly retire?

[Exit Guiscard with marks of unwillingness.]

SCENE II.

Tancred and Archbishop.

Archb. Because he is a man—and, being
such,

Feels all the weakness of his humble nature;
Lets foolish pity, with infectious grief,
Dissolve his soul in tenderness. 'Tis not
For princes, sure,—we intermediate beings
'Twixt God and man,—to feel the mockery
That waits on such infirmity!

Tanc. Know, brother,
These taunts but ill become you. Must I kneel
'Fore a monk's consist'ry? Is that the bar
Where I must plead, and justify my actions?

Archb. No, Tancred, no; yet there's a judgment-seat
Where purple kings, high as their full-blown
pride

Or flattery can set them, must be summon'd :
'Tis in their subjects' rigorous inquisition
They may forestall the more tremendous process
That waits beyond the grave.—Think'st thou thy
people,
Because they bear, don't feel their injuries ?

Tanc. There spoke the restless spirit of the
church :—

And does Sedition's larum-bell become
Those pious hands ? Is it for thee to bawl
Resistance to the mob ; for thee to seek
Sad grievance, where no grievance is, and
sow,

Hid in that sacred garb, the seeds of discord,
Which, once dispersed through the prolific air,
Not all your holy witchcraft can recall ?

Archb. Tancred, you are my sovereign ; as
your subject,

I bear this ill construction of my actions.

I am your brother too ; as such I dare

Encroach upon a servant's low obedience,

Nor fear to warn you, though you bind the
pilot

Who would direct you through a sea of danger.

Tanc. What are these dangers but some new
creation

Of a distemper'd brain, and feverish night?

Archb. A dying wretch, whose pangs to sooth
this morn

One of our order watch'd with pious office,

Disclosed this plot against your sacred life :

Death dropp'd his javelin, 'till the sick man
drew

From underneath his languid head this list

Of foul conspiracy. [giving a paper.]

Tanc. What's this I see?

Monforti's name?

Archb. Yes. In the assassin's roll

He has the bright pre-eminence.

Tanc. Base fiction,

To undo the man I love !—Where are Salerno's

Poisons ?—Has she not one, among her sons,

Who knows the fittest moment of the night

For undiscover'd murder, that ye fling

This net of accusation o'er so many ?

Archb. Pray Heaven the charge prove false,
by jealousy

Forged, to divert the streams of royal favour !

Yet stand upon your guard, recall the troops
That fill your frontier towns, and O let caution—

Tanc. Where reason cannot prop the dark
suspicion,

Caution is cowardice ; prudence but a name,
A pompous title dignified to hide
Mean apprehensions, and unmanly doubts.

'Fore Heaven ! the knife that drinks my heart's
best blood

Would pain me less, than, living, still to hear
The just upbraidings of dishonour'd friendship.

Archb. There's virtue in those words : and yet,
to borrow

The specious veil of justice, and to breathe
Her rigorous dictates, for no better end
Than from thyself—nay, shrink not—from thy-
self

To hide a favourite's guilt ; in her fair temple,
To seek asylum 'gainst the pointed shame
That needs must follow such misplaced affec-
tion ;—

Fie, fie—'tis much beneath you.—The insect
tribes

That, at the night-fall, buzz about the lake,

Are less in number than the perilous chances
That hover round your couch. Think, think on
this :

And yet you'd fling your armour in a corner,
And sleep as if your rule had been so pure
As did from all men challenge watch and guard.

Tanc. Are not the chambers of this palace
fill'd

With veteran chiefs, of valour well approved,
And unsuspected faith? will such men join
Sedition's short-lived rabble? will they bear
To view their honourable scars, obtain'd
At their old master's side, thus meanly blended
With the foul scratches of rebellion's sword?
Trust me, they will not : and, if danger, like
An incorporeal spirit, can glide through
The slender crevice of all earthly shelter,
Where is a prince in safety?—where secure?

Archb. In the strong fortress of his people's
love ;

That is the citadel for kings : 'tis there,
Safe as our Alpine eagle, who looks down
On storms that combat in the ethereal plain,
May'st thou look down upon all worldly mischief.

'Tis from that height, thou'lt see the storms of
envy,
The plots of desperate guilt, the assassin scheme
Of disappointed pride, and all the rage
Of frustrated ambition, break beneath thee.

SCENE III.

Enter Anselmo.

What tidings of conspiracy's foul aim
[to Anselmo.
Have reach'd thy ear, Anselmo? of its leaders
What notice learn'st thou from the spies assign'd
To watch their secret motions?

Ansel. More I learn not,
But that, ere long, Monforti has appointed
To meet a chosen band in the long gallery,
Well suited to their treason, which, remote
From all observers' eyes, o'erhangs the river.

Archb. Lo! Tancred, now, what, blindly, men
call chance,
The secret purpose of Heaven's guardian care
Affords a fit occasion to convince you,

My fears were built not on the groundless base
Of loose suspicion.

Tanc. Yet, I must have proof
Clear as the noontide light, ere in my breast
One thought be harbour'd of Monforti's falsehood.

Archb. Let us be present at the appointed
place,
And let your eyes give credit to the scene
Themselves shall witness.

Tanc. Yes, I will attend you,
Not to detect my servant's guilt, but prove
The steady zeal of his unshaken virtues. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

THE STREET BEFORE TANCRED'S PALACE.

Hassan, solus.

How often have I, from my fix'd resolve,
Been strongly tempted—Yes, the very hour ;
The place where Tancred found him ; his story,
The common theme of gossiping discourse ;
Oh all, yes all proclaim him mine.—If spurn'd
An outcast and a beggar, why to him,

To mar his blooming fortunes, should I leave
The dangerous duty to avenge my wrongs !
But tyrants are capricious, and will sometimes
Turn to sweet mercy for a change—Happy
Who seize on that rare interval.—See, he comes.

Enter Guiscard.

Guisc. Hassan, I grieve to tell thee, thy
 offences
Have sunk so deeply into Tancred's bosom,
'Twere vain to hope for pity or forgiveness.

Hass. What is my sentence ? is the rack to tear
These sinews ? is my blood to stain the scaffold ?
Or must I, clasp'd in famine's icy arms,
Whole days and nights in vain solicit death ?

Guisc. Not so :—but yet, old man, prepare to
 meet
The fiercest vengeance, if thou'rt found to-morrow
Within these walls.

Hass. Thy slumbers will be soft
For this fair deed, this good intent, though
 cross'd :

I will intrude no longer.

[going out.]

Guisc. Hassan, see,

These tears shall witness that I share thy sorrow!

Hass. Farewell!

Guisc. Ah! whither dost thou bend thy steps?

Hass. Ask not; the ties that would have fix'd
me here,

And made me brave, perhaps, the tyrant's fury,
Are broken, and dissolved:—Excuse this weak-
ness:—

I had a wife and child!—

[weeping.]

Guisc. And do they not
Remain, to lock thee in their fond embraces,
Hang on thy neck, repaying tears with tears,
To kneel at Tancred's feet, and by the magic
Of wringing hands, and sobs, and cries, avert
Thy cruel doom?

Hass. Alas! they are no more:
O'er their loved heads the gloomy waves have
spread
Their watery curtains.—Angels, guard his
youth!—

Farewell!—

Guisc. Where did'st thou learn their dismal
fate?

Hass. Already I have gone too far—Sweet youth,

What can'st thou have to do with woe.—Hear me,
Thou servest a tyrant, be not prodigal
Of grief for others :

I would not rob thee of a single tear
That thou may'st want, perhaps, before to-
morrow,

To wash away the stinging recollection
Of royal favour lost, and perjured greatness.

Guis. You but increase my eagerness to hear
The horrors of your fate.

Hass. Know then, young soldier,
(And yet I feel unwilling) 'twas my lot,
Amidst a strange variety of woes,
Flying this country, to become the slave
Of a Sicilian pirate, then returning
From lawless ravage on Calabria's shores :
It was his boast, e'en at the gates of Tancred,
Who, in that season, held his court at Reggio,
Without resistance to have borne away
A beauteous female; one, whose humble rai-
ments

But ill conceal'd her dignity of charms,

Telling a tale of alter'd fortunes,
And affluence changed to want. At this, my
heart

Sunk dead within my bosom; for 'twas there
My wife had fled, to rear her infant son
In virtuous privacy. Her form he drew
With so much circumstantial cruelty,
That lively hope grew wither'd while he spoke.

Guisc. I blame my curiosity; indeed
I did not think to touch the fatal string
Of such accumulated woes.

Hass. In truth,
I doubt it not.—He, with a brutal sigh
Of disappointment, not of pity, added,
That, as they made from land, a sudden storm
Drew all attention from their sacred prize:
She, in that moment, plunged into the deep,
And thus, escaping with her honour, made
Self-murder lovely.

Guisc. And thy infant son?

Hass. Oh I can tell no more. Let me retire—

Guisc. Gods! the Calabrian shore! a drowned
mother!

Hass. Let me depart, young man—

Guisc. How pale you look !

Hass. Let me depart, I say.

Guisc. Not till you clear

These agonizing doubts—Thy little child !

Thy helpless son !

Hass. [*after much hesitation.*] O I am lost,
undone !

They tore him from his mother's arms, and left

The smiling cherub on the rocky strand ;

And here I find him.

Guisc. O it must be so—

For, when did Nature suffer other powers

To share her empire, or what spirit dares

To steal her pangs, her wondrous sympathies,

Or ope the sacred source of tears like these.

Hass. Was it to Tancred that I owe my
child ?

Guisc. To him we are indebted for this joy.

Hass. Recall that word ; it could not be to
Tancred :

Say, that some monster from the pitying deep,

Or the shag'd queen of the impervious forest,

Was thy strange fostering nurse, and I'll believe
thee.

Guisc. Alas! 'twas Tancred saved your help-
less orphan.

Hass. 'Tis false—he has no softness in his
nature :

Hell's ministers are truer to their charge,
Nor e'er will suffer pity to o'erleap
The circle of their damned powers:—for tell me,
Am I not driven to want, debasing want?

O! grant me patience!—'tis not age alone
That blanches this sad head; 'tis my foul wrongs;
'Tis Tancred's cruelty.—And wert not thou,

My virtuous Constance, left without a guard!
Thy charms inviting insult, yet deprived
Of a fond husband's arm to shelter thee!

Are Heaven's own lightnings then no longer
deem'd

The fiery javelins of a vengeful power,
That Tancred's head ne'er felt the scorching blast?

If [*kneeling.*] Hell hath torments in her sulphu-
rous womb,

If Heaven loves justice!—[*rising.*] But he saved
my boy,

He saved my orphan, and I cannot curse him.

[*embracing Guiscard.*]

Guis. Let us, I pray thee, sir, retire within.

Hass. Lend me thine arm : these aged limbs
had borne me

To the extremest ridge of Caucasus ;

Nay, I had journey'd through all Lybia's sands,
And had not felt such weariness.—[*embracing
his son.*] O Gods !

I could have borne my woes ; that stranger Joy
Wounds while it smiles. The long-imprison'd
wretch,

Emerging from the night of his damp cell,
Shrinks from the sun's bright beams, and that
which flings

Gladness o'er all, to him is agony. [Exeunt.

SCENE V.

Enter Manfred and Bender.

Manf. Was't not thy master parted hence ?—
recall him,

I have some business for his private ear—

Re-enter Guiscard.

Guiscard, I long have sought thee ; fain I would
Divide this flood of joy, and let one stream
Direct its laughing course to thee : that breast
Still, as it shared, hath lessen'd all my woes,
And shall it not, when Manfred tastes of bliss,
Partake the golden gift ?

Guisc. Speak, Manfred, speak.

Manf. Guiscard, be then inform'd,
The hour may come when this imperial city,
These powerful realms, the nations that now own
Tancred's extensive sway, shall be ordain'd
To hail me lord of all Sicilia's land.

The nobles have approved the choice, and sworn,
On their bright swords, to see their prince obey'd.

Guisc. Is not by this his daughter foully
wrong'd ?

She, who is fit to bear all earthly crowns,
And see the world beneath her rule, must she,
Must she be cheated of her little portion,
This atom of the globe ?—Manfred, refuse
The dangerous offer ; for should she unveil

Her face in tears, but raise her magic voice,
And plead her cause before a weeping people,
Thy empire's at an end: the very swords,
On which to thee allegiance is engraved,
Would all be drawn to force thee from that seat
Where usurpation, not fair right, had placed
thee.

Manf. Guiscard, I little understand this
warmth :—

Hear then : no princess wails her lost dominions ;
Nor I from thee deserve the hard aspersion.
Tell me, I pray thee, tell me, have I robb'd,
Or clipp'd from merit's brow, one leaf of laurel,
To add to those I have so fairly won?
And, if I have not pilfer'd for renown,
Nor let that syren, Opportunity,
Allure me from the path which Justice treads,
Why should I now begin to play the villain,
And spoil that sex a soldier lives to guard?
Besides, if crowns and realms have such allure-
ments,

How many trembling monarchs of the east
Did pluck their proud tiaras from their brows,
Baring their foreheads to the sun, and strove

Who first should cheat us with their glittering
baubles !

No—Sigismonda is, of all the mine,
The only jewel that endears this gift.

Guis. Is it to try me, that you tell me this ?
Or, is it to chastise the only crime
That on our friendship cast a shade ? By Heaven
I swear, my heart ne'er held a secret thought
Before unknown to thine.

Manf. I do not want
To cloak my meaning in ambiguous terms ;
Be plain in speech, as I am : Tancred gives
This day his daughter to my arms, and with her,
For her fair portion, half his mighty realm.

Guis. Manfred, thy frankness calls for mine ;
I tell thee,
And in as loud a voice as thou canst raise,
That Sigismonda never must be thine.
Her vows of plighted constancy and faith,
Those sacred vows of truth, are mine, and
Heaven's.

And will't not irk thee, though her father drag
The struggling victim to thy hated bed,
To hear thy murmuring words of love repaid

With bitter loathings and reproaching tears ?
But let me warn thee, at such rites as those
'Tis Death, not Hymen, lights the fatal torch.

Manf. Could I believe it possible—methought
Those words did wear the ugly shape of menace :
And, could I credit more amazing things,
In thee I am to view a dangerous rival !

Guisc. Yes, Manfred, yes, I am that dangerous rival ;
And, by this bold confession, though I drag
All plagues, and every mischief on my head,
That humbled pride and disappointment know,
Yet, 'twere as easy for me to renounce
My love, as to conceal its raging power.

Manf. Shameless presumption ! am I then to
fear
That Sigismonda has bestow'd a thought
On one of doubtful birth ?

Guisc. 'Tis false :—of that
No more :—but were it true, the charge were
base,
Base as thy foul ingratitude ; for, say,
Was't not this arm that snatch'd thee from thy
fate ?

And, when the Turk had struck thee to the
ground,

Who was it then stepp'd in 'twixt death and thee,
And laid the fierce barbarian at thy side?—

I ne'er should speak of this, but that you tempt
me

Beyond all human bearing. Then you did not,
You did not ask, if 'twere my vulgar birth,
My coarse extraction, that so strung my nerves,
And gave the lightning to my hand ; nor truly,
If it were peasant's blood which stream'd so fast
From the wide wound that fortune meant for you;
You did not then enquire—

Manf. O spare me, Guiscard,
I have been much to blame.

Guis. Indeed you have ;
For you have forced me to despise myself,
The mean recorder of my own deserts.
Know, 'what I did for thee, I would' have done
For the most low and abject wretch that fought
Beneath our banners ; yet, in that poor wretch,
In that mean slave, I might have found a virtue,
Which grandeur should not blush to wear, a true,
A generous recollection of the service.

Manf. Yet, Guiscard, hear me.

Guisc. Hear you! bid me hear you!—

Be patient in my wrongs, and, with a meekness
Well suited to my low estate, pour forth
My blessings, with the fawning crowd, when you
Bear, through Salerno's streets, your perjured
bride!

Manf. Now, by our order's holy saint, I mean
To cancel all I owe thee—I renounce
All claim to Sigismonda's charms, and brave
A father's anger for his slighted-offer.

Guisc. What's this I hear?—you do not mean
to mock me?

Manf. Nay more; my ample realms shall be
the asylum,

Where persecuted love and truth shall find
A safe retreat :—and this I swear to do.—
Now, Guiscard, tell me, am I still thy debtor?
Nor rate too high this sacrifice: the heart
That's lock'd in others' bonds, for me has lost
Its fascinating powers; I freely yield it.

Guisc. O, generous Manfred, raise me not from
earth!

Rage freely vents itself in proud defiance,

Grief has its milky tears, Despair is lost
In all-forgetting madness ; but alas !
What secret source of ease has Gratitude ?
Nothing but cold unsatisfying thanks ;
Actions and deeds are fruits which wait the
spring

And warmth of slow occasion for their birth ;
Words never can unload this breaking heart.

Manf. Thus let us ever hide each other's
weakness ! [embracing.

I have not time for more ; for, at this hour,
Salerno's prelate, in the palace garden,
Awaits my coming : something, the holy brother,
Who did impart his wishes, seem'd to hint
Of schemes and plots : he earnestly entreated
Our captains might have orders to repair
With speed on board the fleet ; and there to wait
Their chief's commands.—This, Guiscard, see
perform'd. [Exeunt.

THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.

ACT IV.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A PART OF THE PALACE WHICH OPENS INTO A
GARDEN.

Enter Sigismonda and Sibilla.

Sigis. How changed is all around me !—the
black vapour,
That rises from my brain, has tinged each object
With its funereal dye. The plants and flowers
Fade as I stoop to crop them ; and, even now,
The sun, who, with his golden lips, saluted
The trembling bosom of the lake, did hide
His beams at my approach.—Methought the herd
Changed, as I pass'd along, their cheerful lowings
To sounds most terrible. No bird appear'd,
Save such as, sitting on the castle's height,
Seem'd, with their clamorous tongues, to talk of
things
Where pain and death had part !—
Sibil. Ah ! feed not thus

Your inward grief with dreams of fancied sor-
rows ;

Too much of real anguish doth afflict

Your tortured bosom.

Sigis. —What !—to marry Manfred !—

This night !—And then, did he refuse to hear me ?

Did Tancred turn away ?—Did Tancred leave

His once-loved daughter prostrate on the ground ?

Sibil. Comfort ! my mistress, all may yet be
well !

Sigis. Ye heavenly powers ! what horrors
hourly wait

To blast compulsion's execrated vow !—

Round the domestic hearth, how soon may rise

Hatred, with its fell scorpion sting !—to that

What woes succeed !—'tis then, the adulterous
fiend

Dares whisper in the ear but ill seal'd up

'Gainst his pestiferous voice !—and then it is,

O horrible ! that murder has been known,

Giving the lamp of night its steadiest flame,

To mark where a remorseless wife should drive

The assassin knife, and, with a husband's blood,

Redden the marriage-bed. Have there not been

Who, in the hate of those they call'd their husbands,
Did wreak fierce vengeance on their helpless offspring,
And, deaf to nature, with a madden'd rage,
While their poor babes were slumbering in their laps,
Have stabb'd the little innocents?—And yet,
Ye cruel parents, sooner ye'd endure
Your children blacken'd with the foulest sins
Of those detested mothers, than that they
Should shun the choice which pride and avarice
Have made so dear to you!—

SCENE II.

Enter Guiscard.

Sigis. My Guiscard here!

Guisc. Yes, I am come, but not to see thee
break

Thy plighted vows, and be the wife of Manfred.

Sigis. What means my Guiscard?—Say, can
he bring comfort

In this dark hour of grief? He knows my father,
He knows his hard commands.

Guisc. He does; yet it
Depends on thee, whether those hard commands,
That power which Heaven ne'er gave, shall be
obey'd
Or boldly set at naught.

Sigis. On me?

Guisc. On thee:

For Manfred, generous friend! the man I deem'd
My hated rival, (and in rage did that
For which my cheek must ever wear a blush,)
Him I upbraided with my services;
Yet he has given thee back, resists thy beauty,
Thy wondrous charms, and, like another Scipio,
Suffers his friend to lead away the prize.
Nay more, his fleet shall guard thee from these
lands

To love and safety in his powerful realms.

Sigis. Alas! what say'st thou?—leave my
father's palace?

My honour tainted, and my name aspersed!

Guisc. Honour shall have its right.—A hus-
band's title

Shall be the bulwark of thy fame. All's lost
If you resolve not quickly:—This hour, Tancred
Gives to repose: this hour must make you mine,
Or we must part for ever. In that chamber,
Where your loved mother dwelt, a reverend priest
Attends my orders.—Dangers fly around us.
For, if we yet should linger here, the eye
Of piercing curiosity will search
Our very looks, and through our inmost souls
Dart its quick beam.—My life—but what of
that—

It is not worth a thought—

Sigis. Not worth a thought?—

Thy precious life?—My care for that bears down,
Like an impetuous torrent, all before it;
Thy life,—thy safety asks the dangerous tribute:
'Tis paid, and I am thine!—[*kneeling.*] Shade
of my mother,

I here invoke thee!—

And, if the solemn deed I'm now to act,
Has, as I deem it has, its sacred source
In honour, virtue, constancy, and truth,
Look down, and bless it from thy heavenly man-
sions!

Guisc. O generous Sigismonda!—but what words

Can duly thank you?

Sigis. Wonder not, my Guiscard,
That, in the tumult of conflicting passions,
I had forgot thy letter, which instructs me
In the strange story of thy noble birth.
And now, perhaps, my Guiscard thinks to watch
The wild effusions of a joyful bosom;
Expects to hear me thank abundant Heaven,
That his fair birth is equal to his virtues.
But what has birth, or titled parentage,
A long-drawn lineage, or a proud descent,
To do with real love?—Disclaim thy birth,
For that, methinks, deprives me of a proof
Of what I dare for thee.

Guisc. You, then, must swear
That secret never shall escape your lips.

Sigis. O, why must it be seal'd in endless
night?

Guisc. A father, guiltless of his son's offence,
May live to share his punishment.

Sigis. Oh! guard him,
Ye saints, and, though we fall, may he be left

To steal, unnoticed to our hapless graves,
And give his tears to our ill-fated loves !

Guisc. Banish such thoughts : next moment
makes thee mine :

And, when the morning breaks, Salerno's towers
May faintly glimmer in the distant prospect.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Monforti and Raimond, meeting.

Raim. Stop, stop, my lord,—the path you
would pursue

Leads far away from love, revenge, and power :
That vision 's past :—it points but to the abode
Of death.—All is discover'd : even now,
Behind the arras as I stood conceal'd,
I heard the king direct his chosen guard
To seek the spot where we had fix'd our meeting,
And, when the appointed signal should be thrown
From the west tower, quick to rush forth at once,
And act as then commanded.

Monf. Calmly, then,
Let's meet our fate, my friend : to escape—to fly,
Impossible :—no more of that.—And yet—

Raim. [*after musing an instant.*]—O yet, there
is a way,
And only one, which, like a thawing flood,
This fatal moment must be cross'd, or never.

Monf. O name it straight.

Raim. Be it for us, my lord,
To intercept our friends, ere they draw near
The horrid brink, where Fate and Ruin beckon :
If they've the souls of men, they will not fall
Ere yet the thirst of great revenge be sated,
And Tancred's palace flow with blood.—Their
arms
Are all at hand.—Lead them to instant action ;
Safety and conquest still may smile upon us.

Monf. You give me hope ; the pit, indeed, is
dug,
But yet the lion may escape the snare. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

THE VESTIBULE TO THE GALLERY.

Enter Tancred, Archbishop, Attendants, Guards.

Tanc. By Heavens ! it half repents me to have
come

Thus far : all here is quiet—not a foot-fall.—
Where lurks this treason ?—Nay, I do beseech
you,

Another time, good brother, as you love us,
Give poppies to your sick :—record no more
Such boding dreams, as is your trade to invent,
Cheating the fond credulity of women.

Archb. O, you are merry, brother ; but restrain
Your triumph till the danger's o'er ;—as yet,
We have not reach'd the appointed place of guilt.

Tanc. Come then, let's on, you shall indulge
your humour.

Archb. Methinks, beyond that pillar, some-
what seems
To glide, of human form.

Tanc. Truly, 'tis one
In holy vestments; he appears to shun us :
Seize quickly on the slave.

[*a friar is brought in.*

Archb. What art thou, man,
That, in these solitary regions, prowls't
Far from all human converse?—does thy zeal
For our religion prompt thee to this gloom
Of meditation?—would not holy thoughts
As well illumine the night of thy own cloister,
And cell recluse?

Tanc. See, he turns pale. Know, friar,
Thy errand is betray'd;—confess thy crime,
Reveal thy foul conspiracy; or death,
In its worst shape—

Friar. O! my good lord, be patient!
I am no traitor, no conspirator.

Tanc. Then bear him to the rack, and try if
torture
Can draw the secret from him.

Friar. Grant me life,—
I can unfold a dismal tale :—but yet
Expect to hear that, which may make life's
current

Stop in its course, never, perhaps, to gain
Its channel more !

Tanc. Friar, speak on, and fear not.

Friar. Gold, which I did not want, that curse
the earth

Flings back on man for raking in her bowels,
Has damn'd my honesty, and ruin'd thee.

Tanc. What can this mean ?—Proceed.

Friar. Connubial rites

This hour has seen perform'd : the horrid omens
Are now too well explain'd : Grief and Despair
Stood screaming by the altar !—ghastly Death
Witness'd the lovers' oath, and, in his tablets,
Wrote their sad names in blood !—Now, Tan-
cred, mark me,

Guiscard and Sigismonda—

Tanc. Raven, cease,

And, for this hellish falsehood——[*runs at him
with his dagger, but is stopped by the
Archbishop.*

Ansel. O, restrain

Your rage !

Tanc. Adders twist round his tongue !—Vile
wretch,

If this were true, the utterance of such crimes
Dissolves all compact with thee.

Archb. This is madness—

A prince's word, like the all-glorious sun,
When little planets vagrant roll, should stand
Immutable, and fix'd for ever.—Fear not,
Finish this killing tale.

Friar. The bark unbends
Her sails, which, through the favour of the night,
Is to transport the destin'd pair.—They tarry
In the adjoining chamber.

Tanc. [*going out.*] This the way
That leads me to them.

Archb. [*stopping him.*] Yet one moment,
Tancred,
One moment give to temperate thought. Consider
What wrongs provoke thee—then, into what
abyss

Of woes, thy thirst of vengeance and of blood
May plunge us all; I have no hope that Pity
Dare, midst such horrors, shew her face to plead
For the poor victims. Tancred, yet be calm,
And, with a soul unbow'd beneath affliction,
Approve thyself a man.

Tanc. Yes, yes, my brother,
I will be patient ; and I will dam up
The torrents of my rage ; I'll feel no shame
To weep, and play the woman !—O ! my child,
O Sigismonda, thou hast kill'd thy father !—
Am I not calm ?—This, this is not the hour
Of angry purposes :—revenge and hatred,
In this fierce tempest of conflicting passions,
Assume a thousand different shapes at once,
Puzzling my senses, like a troop of spectres,
Which flit so quick before me, I can seize
On none.—Alas ! was not her virgin soul
Whiter, far whiter, than the ivory throne
Of sainted Innocence, till this cursed deed ?—
To let that bramble twist its baleful leaves
Round her fair stem !—*[after some pause.]* Ah !

I've a thought—'twill do—

'Tis great,—and yet, if I approach these serpents,
My fury damns the project :—take my dagger—

[gives his dagger to an attendant.]

And, though I should command their instant
death,

Obey me not.—Then, have I not her tears
To combat too ?—yet shall those very tears

But minister to vengeance :—yes, I'll use
Those drops—her cries for mercy—shrieks of
fear—

Only to blunt my rage, and, for a while,
To lull the storm ; so that my slow revenge
Shall be as ample as a father's wrongs.—
Lead to this wanton bower of guilt and shame.

Archb. [*to one of the guard.*] Here take thy
stand, observant of each step
That passes near the palace, and impart
The earliest notice of suspected treason.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

THE GALLERY.

Guiscard, Sigismonda, Hassan, Sibilla, Bender.

Guisc. Let me speak comfort to thee ;—Ah !
why beats
This little heart so quick ? why glance thine eyes,
Now to the vault of heaven, now fixed down,
As they would pierce the earth ?—My love, my
wife,

My beauteous Sigismonda, here repose
Thy fluttering soul; this chamber is the abode
Of safety, and of silence.

Sigis. O! you err,
You sadly err:—such fears may come hereafter.
A father's grief comes with the whirlwind's sweep,
And carries all before it.

Hass. Ye just Gods!
That this can be the child of tyranny!
Sigis. O Tancred, author of my being, thus,
Thus I reward thy love!—Withheld by Time,
When Death did stand as at a distance from
thee,

I've dragg'd the unwilling minister of fate
Towards thy sacred head!—'Tis, 'tis too much.
Nay, [*turning to Guiscard.*] when we plough
the sea, though your fond arms,
Shield me from angry waves, and whistling
winds,

Though from my cheeks you wipe the tears away,
And murmur in my ear such tender words
As only I may hear, and you can utter,
Ev'n then a father's threatening form may rise,
From the black deep, to blast our guilty joys.

Guisc. O ! no, kind Venus shall direct our
bark ;

The astonish'd deep shall wonder how we cleave
His glassy bosom ;—unperceived, the Loves
Shall waft us on, and, mindful of the charms
Of Egypt's lovely Queen, confess how far
Thy beauty shines above her !—Then arrived
Where Manfred's friendship shall securely place us,
Far from the noisy world, in some lone castle,
Encircled with impenetrable shades,
Each golden day we'll consecrate to love ;
There, every hour shall witness some contrivance,
Some new device to please you, till invention
Itself shall be no more, and nothing left
But iterated joy, delight, and fondness.

Hass. [*starting.*] Ha ! whence those sounds ?
—alas ! my wretched children.

[*While he speaks these words, the folding
doors in the back of the stage suddenly
open, and enter*

(SCENE VI.)

Tancred, Archbishop, Friar, Attendants.

Sigis. My father—and the priest! nay then,
all's lost! [*running into Guiscard's arms.*
There's only time for this.—Now, Tancred, now
Cleave with one stroke two faithful hearts at once.

Guisc. [*embracing Sigismonda.*] Here take,
thou prodigy of love and courage,
A husband's first, a husband's last embrace!

Tanc. [*recovering from his surprise.*] What—
in my sight!—O! horror, guilt, and shame!
What, not restrain your strong libidinous wills,
But, in the presence of the conscious day,
Imbrute!—Though bestial sensuality
Had hurried half the sex to the embraces
Of all that's monstrous of earth, air, or sea,
Still had I deem'd, (but how deceived and
cheated!)

That this sweet wax, unmelted, had retain'd
Its virgin purity!

Sigis. Tancred, I know my offence, and, seeing too

The hideous garb in which it meets your eyes,
Hope not for pardon, but, as most befits me,
Submit with meek, though not repentant soul,
To all your rage may dictate. If your vengeance
Points its just aim to blast the guiltiest head,
Here, Sigismonda stands prepared to meet it.
'Twas I, not he, that cut the fatal isthmus,
Which birth, and rank, and pride, had placed
between us,

Flung down the sandy barriers, and at once
Let the two eager torrents rush together.

Guis. This is too much.—Tancred, believe
her not,

Reject the generous fiction ; satiate here
Your utmost fury.

Tanc. Gods ! can I give credit
To all I see, and hear ! and yet 'twas well
I gave away my poniard, or this moment
Had been their last.

Sigis. I had stretch'd this willing neck
To have met the axe, and smiled upon its edge ;
I had felt the rude assassin's griping hand

Buried in these poor ringlets, nor had heaved
A sigh, nor utter'd weak complaint ; while pity
For thee, my father, (who art doom'd to drag
Thy woes about the world, when we may sleep
In our cold graves,) and the extatic thought
Of being borne again to those dear arms,
In regions where we ne'er shall part, had checker'd

My few remaining hours of life !—But now,
To hear my honour murder'd, and pure modesty
So coarsely blasted by a parent's breath,
This is most hard, indeed !

Tanc. Ye holy spirits !

Is this my child, or not ?—That syren tongue,
That face of innocence, so like her mother's,
Bespeak her Sigismonda.—But alas !

Where is that chaste reserve, that sweet acquaintance

With all which duty prompts, and virtue acts ?
Some [*turning to Guiscard.*] dæmon sure, in
mischief exquisite

Above his fellows, takes that villain's shape
Thus to undo me !—Thou insidious reptile,
That keep'st thy poison for the hand that feeds thee,

Worm, that wast writhing out thy hateful life,
Till I recall'd it back, say, what excuse
Has falsehood for this monstrous treachery?

Guis. Where there's no crime, there needs be
no defence.

To shelter Virtue, Falsehood need not ope
The treasure of her arts, nor will fair Truth
Clothe that in armour which may naked pass,
And brave, with conscious innocence, the world.
Excuse I have none. If Tancred would be taught
The cause of what injustice terms a crime,
Learn, then, 'twas Love, almighty, glorious Love;
Love, that so long has torn this restless planet,—
Love, in whose cause, oceans of blood have
flow'd,

And ne'er shall cease to stream, while man re-
tains

His form, an image of his God, and keeps
One atom of his heavenly nature perfect.—
As for my birth—of that mistake, O! witness
This sad refuter! [*pointing to Hassan.*—Know,
your daughter loved me,
Loved, when she deem'd me low as your reproach
Can make me!—Humbler in my own esteem,

And meaner still, I dared, an earth-born reptile,
To gaze on that celestial orb.

Hass. See, Tancred,
In me, the injured Conrad, and the sire
Of Guiscard. Heaven, in justice, has repaid
Thy wrongs of me, in him I proudly call
My son.

Tanc. His destiny were happier, had he been
The vilest slave, the base-born, grovelling, off-
spring

Of rags, disease, and beggary, than sprung
From thy rebellious loins. Contempt, perhaps,
Had pour'd its dull allay upon my vengeance,
And mitigated torture ;—now, thank Heaven !
His birth has made him worthy of my rage.

Archb. O Sigismonda !—lost, undone for
ever !

That those rare beauties, mild engaging manners,
The spring of softness, and the golden summer,
Rich with all Nature's fruits, and ripe perfections,
Should be the harbingers of so much ruin !
Still art thou dear !—ah ! that this faltering
voice

Had but a sound of comfort, or of hope !

Sigis. Talk not to me of hope : the drowning wretch,

When all the ocean's level with his eyes,
May be buoy'd up by hope :—that poor deceiver
Shall find no welcome in this breast.—Despair
Enter'd the portal with you :—she, who's wont
To plough up all things with her driving share,
Making a chaos of the human breast,
Has cut the thriving root of every hope,
That fear may grow the stronger.

Tanc. Ah, I knew

What needs must follow all thy boasted firmness ;
I thought how long the victim would remain
Thus patient, and submissive, at the altar !
It is your sex's great prerogative
To do superior ill, and it is one,
Midst Nature's hidden laws, never to make you
Cowards, until the daring sin's committed :
She gives you fears for torment, not prevention.

Sigis. Yes, Tancred, yes, I do confess that
fear

Rends and distracts me. O ! it is most horrible
To think, when Guiscard's blood shall have ap-
peased

A portion of your rage, (when all that's godlike,
When honour, virtue, truth, and generous love,
In his cold bosom are entomb'd,) that you,
To me more cruel than to him, may shew
Scorn'd and detested mercy.

Tanc. I'll hear no more—this throbbing brain
will burst—

Quick to their dungeons bear the scorpions from
me.

Sigis. O! moment worse than death! O wild
distraction!

Support me, holy sir, or I shall sink—

[she leans, fainting, upon the Archbishop.]

Your arm—O! this is kind indeed.

Archb. Good Heaven,

My child, support thee in this hour of trial!

Guisc. *[breaking from those who attempt to hold him.]* Ruffians; stand by—respect a
husband's woe.

O! she is breathless :—are those marble cheeks
Thus blanch'd for ever?—to eternal grief
Then may she never wake! Help to unlock
Her clenching hands.—Yet she revives—O
agony!

Tanc. Tear them asunder.

Sigis. Where, O where's my husband?—
Is he not dead?—Let me but look upon him—
But one short instant,—and 'tis all I ask.

Guisc. O! you shall never—never part us—

Sigis. Hark!

Do not I hear his voice?—My life, my Guiscard,
Thy Sigismonda calls.—I see him not—

Tanc. Furies and death! will none obey the
king?

Why lingers still the traitor in our sight?

Guisc. Off—murderous hell-hounds.

Guard. 'Tis our duty, sir;

'Twere vain to struggle.

Guisc. O! remorseless tyrant!

[they tear him off by force.]

Sigis. His voice again!—and now it dies
away—

'Tis heard no more—Hush—hush—it was from
thence

It came!—alas! all's silent!—and you weep!

[turning to the Archbishop.]

Now by the God of truth, whom you adore,
Tell me, O quickly, I conjure you, tell me,

Are Guiscard's sufferings at an end?—You sigh,
And shake your head—O! then I know the
worst—

You have a tender heart, a gentle soul,
And tears for grief like mine: pray bear with
me,

I hardly know what's past.

Archb. Guiscard still lives.—

But—

Sigs. O that *but*,—

Returning reason gives it all its horrors.

Tanc. [*to Sigismonda.*] Back to thy chamber:
ere the sun shall hide

His beams, in shame of such detested crimes,
Uncertain of thy fate, expect my coming.

I shall have business with thee, that will try
Thy soul's best powers:—seek not, till then, to
measure

The vast extent of vengeance that may suit
An injured father, and an injured king!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

THE
FATHER'S REVENGE.



ACT V.

ACT V. SCENE I.

A PRISON.

Hassan and Guiscard, both chained.

Hass. These mansions of distress, of deep
despair,
This blood-stain'd pavement, heaps of dead men's
bones,
Where ours must soon be added, (there to blanch
And take their silver polish) groans and screams,
That wind so sharply through these caves of
night,—
Such are thy nuptial honours !—Ah !—how fair
The morning broke, when, smiling, first it
view'd
These aged arms infold a long-lost child,
And crown'd thee with the joys of faithful love !
Heavens ! what a change !—But soft—no more
of this,
Lest, for the poor unmanly occupation

Of brooding o'er such wither'd hopes, we suffer
A dastard wish of life to steal upon us.

Guisc. O ! Sigismonda, I could wish for life,
To be the thing, the creature, most exposed
To human hate, contempt, and injury,
That I might still be near thee, still gaze on
thee ;—

But, to have life without thee—horrid thought !—
O ! let not that, by some avenging fiend,
Be whisper'd in his tyrant pupil's ear !—
His frantic rage, his pride inexorable,
Ensure a kinder lot.—The unrudder'd vessel,
All leak and foundering, with less joy descries
A sail emerging from the bright horizon,
Than I now welcome my approaching fate.

Hass. Nobly resolved ; and, for this strength
of soul,

With more true joy I'll press thee to my heart,
Than when I first pour'd forth the sacred tribute
Of my paternal fondness :—I'd forgot

*[attempting to rise, he is impeded by his
chains, and bursts into tears.]*

My chains.—What folly this, to let a trifle
Unman me thus ! alas ! I was entrench'd

'Gainst pain, and death, and all such open foes :—
'Tis past, and you shall blush for me no more.

Guisc. But, to have drawn this ruin on thy
head—

Hass. Waste not a thought on me.—Sapless
and old,

Yielding nor shelter, fruit, nor foliage,
Nature will sue the winds to clear her forests
Of such unprofitable loiterers ;
They fall, and are not miss'd.—That the rude
blasts

Should single out the pride of all the grove—
There, there's the grief! —without accusing
Heaven,

May we not ask why such things are ?—

Guisc. Methinks,
Through the arch'd labyrinth, I hear the sound
Of distant footsteps ; and, from yon dark aile,
Lo ! ever and anon, a light breaks forth,
And then is lost again.

Hass. Now let me watch thee :—
The blood still keeps thy cheek, thy eyes still
roll
With wonted freedom, and I view no tears ;—

Those chains would tell me if thy nerves but
shook—

Thou art my son ; thou art the child of Conrad.

Guisc. Lo ! they approach—men all well
pick'd and chosen
For such a solemn embassy.

Enter Ruffians.

Hass. Remember, boy, that nature knows not
pain
Beyond a certain point ; and that the soul
Will rush to Heaven, e'en from the smallest
crevice,
Where least her flight is look'd for. The stretch'd
nerves
May throb long after life is done, the heart
May toss in palpitation, as the waves
After a storm, though all is hush'd above.

1 *Ruff.* [to *Guiscard.*] Our business is with
you—unloose him first.

Guisc. Your visages and garbs want no decy-
phering.
Dispatch me quick, and, while I yet have life,

Remember I'm a soldier ; one who fears
More the rude license of a ruffian's tongue,
Than all his equipage of death.

Hass. Alas !

You do not, cannot, mean to slay a son,
And shed his blood before his father's eyes.

1 *Ruff.*—Then this way with him.

[they whisper together.]

2 *Ruff.* *[to Hassan.]* You awhile may wait,
Then hence before the king.

Guis. I once had thought
To have met my fate without a parting look,
This dear embrace,—but that had been unkind-
ness.

[after a long embrace.]

One pang remains behind.—Poor Sigismonda !
Sustain her, Heaven ! infuse into her heart
Some balm of comfort ; and, if woes like these
Must kill her reason, as I think they must,
O ! let her visions all be calm and peaceful !
Quench in her soul the torch of faithful love ;
And when, with puzzled view, and feeble sense,
She'd fain recall things past, let Guiscard's
truth,

Without his sufferings, grief, despair, and end,

Stand singly planted on her weaken'd mind !——
Now, sirs, conduct me. *[he is borne off.]*

Manet Hassan.

Hass. *[after a long silence.]* Perhaps, by this,
'tis o'er.—Ye gracious powers,
For what do you reserve me ?—better fortunes,
And less of sorrow, had been now a curse.—
Adversity, I thank thee ; I've been dragg'd
Up to thy top-mast rock, far, far beyond
Where miserable man e'er trod before.
What is to come, compared with what is past,
Must be all rest and ease.—Tarry bless'd spirit,
Bear witness how I'll emulate thy virtue ;
O ! view in me again thy glorious firmness,
Thy patient mind, unconquerable soul,
Thy scorn of tyrants, and contempt of death !
[he is taken out at the opposite side of the stage,

Monforti and Raimond brought in.

Monf. Say, by what sanction of authority,
Whose order, you conduct us ?

Jailor. See this warrant ;

Let this suffice ; it bears a signature
Stamp'd by Salerno's bishop : 'tis for us
To execute his mandate ; and ev'n now
All Manfred's troops are planted round the walls
Of your associates.

Monf. Baffled by my rival !

The man whose daring enterprize shall claim
A proud reward in Sigismonda's love !
This points Affliction's keenest shaft, and gives
A wound before unfelt :—You speak not, Raimond ;

Hast thou no words for Fortune when she frowns ?

Raim. All words are loathsome—I renounce,
abhor

Their idle use. Had we employ'd our hands,
And not our tongues, Monforti, at this hour
We had in safety stood beyond the reach
Of all the tyrant's rage. But, yet in vain,
I seek to trace the cause, nor can unfold
This treachery.

Monf. 'Twere fruitless to unfold it.

Death now, and death in all its shapes of terror,
Must be our only thought. And O ! my friend,
What torments wait us ! will not coward Nature

Shrink at the nice and exquisite improvements
That art shall add to butchery?—the sharp
But lingering knife—the slow-consuming fire—
The nerve-distending rack—do not all these
Appal thee, Raimond?

Raim. These indeed are tortures
That might appal the dying saint.—'Tis now
The rage of disappointment that to death
Gives tenfold horrors, and inflicts a torment
Beyond what all the tyrant's studied arts
Of cruelty can reach.

Monf. And, add to this
The stings of conscious guilt!—O Raimond had I
Been never born, Salerno's realms had known
A milder sway. I poison'd Tancred's nature,
Dash'd the fair scale of Justice on the ground,
Scourged Mercy from his throne, and placed
about it

The weakest centinels a prince can trust to,—
Hate, Fear, and Pride. I was that envious shade,
Through which the sun-beams never pierced—
the night,

In whose thick damp all the foul passions
gender'd,

That, with the adder's venom'd tooth, crept forth,
And stung an injured people into madness.
I was that wizard, conjuring up all ill,
Myself invisible, while Tancred drew
On his less guilty head his people's hatred.
But now I fall, in my own wiles ensnared,
The victim of my guilt.

Jailor. You'll wonder not,
The purport of my warrant should demand
Your close confinement.—You'll retire within.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

SIGISMONDA'S APARTMENT.

Sigismonda and Sibilla.

Sigis. Does not the solemn hour approach,
that brings,
Robed in paternal awfulness, my judge,
My king, my father?

Sibil. Haply, he revolves,

In his repentant heart, past hours of joy,
The summer of his reign, when you and Guiscard
Shared the mild influence of its genial beams.
Ev'n now, perhaps, he figures to his mind
The state of helpless infancy that first
Gave the loved orphan to his fostering care ;
While pity may revoke the bloody sentence
That lately seal'd his doom,

Sigis. Away, away,
Trifle no longer with me ; 'twas but now,
(Yourself the witness) near his dungeon gate,
Men with sad aspects, and with cautious tread,
Were seen to take their way.—Had this a shew
Of mercy ?—No—they were the slaves to dress
His funeral couch—and Guiscard rests in peace !
How long am I still destined to endure
This curse of life, this insult to my love !
But here comes one who can unfold the mystery.

Enter Tancred, with a vase in his hand.

Tanc. All void the chamber—leave us to be
private.

Sigis. Low at your feet see Sigismonda falls !—

No hand is stretch'd to raise her from the dust,—
No glance, inspiring confidence !—Alas !—
He heeds me not—

Tanc. Let none approach our presence.

Sigis. Then must thy daughter grow for ever
here !

Tanc. Rise : these are idle forms, mere mock-
eries ;

They please me not. What boots the bended
knee,

When the proud stubborn heart derides such
crouchings ?

Behold this vase !

Sigis. I know its dreadful import.

Tanc. Alas ! alas, thou know its import !—
thou !

The babe of ease and joy !—Leave those who've
press'd

The milkless breast of want, who have been
scared,

On the first step of life, with famine, war,

The gangrened plague, or massacre ; leave those,

With all their skill in horrors, to divine

Its foul contents—But thou—

Sigis. I know 'tis poison :

A welcome present, worthy of my father.

You tremble ; give it to my steadier hand.

Tanc. No, let it rest awhile.— [*places it on a table.*] Now hear me, daughter.

Thou dost not, sure, forget that horrid night,

When, circled in these arms, you watch'd in
silence

Your mother's parting breath : the expiring saint,

Fixing her eyes on thee, thus faintly cried,

Almighty Powers ! preserve yon blooming in-
fant,

Make her the comfort of her father's age,

Nurse of his sickness, pleasure of his health ;

And, ere she swerve from Virtue's arduous path,

Take her, O ! take her, pure and innocent,

To your immortal selves !

Short-sighted state of man, unjust and vain

In all his reasonings !—if death had hasten'd

His well-timed course, to save thee from this
ruin,

Still I had wept ; with partial cruelty

Had tax'd high Heaven—perhaps, had follow'd
thee

To the cold grave, in the fond doating error
Of thy bright excellence, that fence impregnable
'Gainst wantonness and vice.

Sigis. Tancred, I make

No empty vaunt ; I boast not, that, since first
This tongue knew utterance, this brain conception,

This bosom sense and feeling, I have loved thee
Beyond a father's poor prerogative,
Or the cold tribute of a daughter's duty.—

My mother's prayer was heard ; she pray'd that
Virtue

Should point my dubious way. 'Twas by that
light

I steer'd ; and fix'd on that, on that alone,

I found it led to Guiscard, and to truth.—

This to his manes ! *[seizing the vase.]*

Tanc. O !—yet hold, my daughter.

Sigis. Idle delay :—the drug may lose its force.

Tanc. Art thou prepared to view—

Sigis. Speak—what?—*[she removes the lid.]*

O ! horror !

What's this that meets my eyes ?

Tanc. Thy husband's heart—

His rebel blood—my exquisite revenge.—
Dost thou approve the gift?

Sigis. [after a long struggle to speak.] I now
have strength

To thank you as I ought!—Do I approve it?—
Thou true, thou honest heart! O sad, O poor
Remains of all my soul held dear! thus, thus
I press thee to this throbbing breast!

Tanc. [aside.] I fear
I've gone too far—behold how eagerly
She grasps the fatal cup.—Forbear, my child,
Forbear.

Sigis. I am conversing with the dead,
And must not be disturb'd.—Alas! poor heart,
And wilt thou ever sleep inanimate
Within thy narrow sepulchre!—Vain shadow
Of that which once was Guiscard! where are all
Thy fine sensations—thy tumultuous pulse?
Spark of ethereal fire, how art thou quench'd!
Region of honour, courage, truth, and love,
All, all laid waste!—'Tis strange I am not mad;
Perhaps I shall not be.—It matters not,
For the short space that's left me.—For, there's
something

That from within whispers my quick releasement.
Methinks I feel like one worn out with age,
Tottering, and weak,—though, at the evening
bell,

(And night's not fallen yet) I had the nerves
Of playful youth.

Tanc. [*half aside.*] O! my lost child, too
late,

Too late, alas! I wish the deed undone.—
Resign the cup—it is a sight too horrible
For mortal vision.

Sigis. Never but with life.—

Swear that no ruffian force shall tear it from me.
But let it thus be lock'd in my embrace,
The partner of my grave! To heaven I'll bear it
With me, the passport to eternal peace!

Tanc. Who talks of peace and heaven!—O
damning guilt!

O sharp remorse! the sounds of peace and heaven,
Harrow my soul with fears:—and, to complete
My woes, thou'rt ready with thy dying curse.

Sigis. I pray come nearer to me.—Thus I
curse thee—

[*embracing him.*

Thus, on thy neck, pour forth the only tears

I've shed in all my grief.—Horror, before,
Dried up their source.

Tanc. And can those injured hands,
That should have sent a poniard to my bosom,
Entwine me thus within them?—I, all stain'd
With blood—ah! and whose blood!

Sigis. That's true: impure

[*starting from him.*

Is thy embrace, and 'tis an impious deed
To approach my husband's murderer. Let me
hence.

*Enter to them hastily, the Archbishop and
Manfred.*

Here comes a holy man, who'll not refuse me
A refuge in my miseries, a corner
Where I may lay this hapless head in quiet,
Where, till my grave is ready, I may hide,
And watch this treasure with a miser's care.

Tanc. Why break you in upon us?

Archb. This intrusion

May find its pardon, when unhop'd-for joy
Bids zeal outstrip the tardy pace of form.

Manf. For that I've saved thy royal house
from ruin,

Thy breast from the assassin's knife, thy crown
From beaming on a traitor's brow, I ask
No thanks, no recompence, but Guiscard's life.

Sigis. O miserable error!—Why to this

[*pointing to the vase which she holds.*]

Do I my eye-balls glue? and wherefore thus
Imprint these kisses on its surface? and
All this without a cause?

Tanc. Better—far better,

For her, for me, for all, to have sunk at once
Together in our country's general ruin,
Than to have life to tell thee, that thou ask'st
Too late.—The sacrifice is made—enquire
No further—

Manf. What—be dumb!—Inhuman tyrant—
But thou shalt rue the deed. Vengeance shall
shake

O'er Guiscard's mangled corse her flaming torch:
I will pursue its light where'er it leads me.

Tanc. I am not worth thy rage; and much too
wretched

To keep a sense of fear, or heed such threats:

O! look on that poor wretch, and let, I pray thee,
Thy meaner grief give place, nor dare to force
Their trifling forms amidst her sacred woes.

[*Sibilla whispers the Archbishop and
Manfred, aside.*

Archb. O Heavens, it cannot be!

Manf. Accursed deed!

Sigis. Perhaps I touch another spring of grief:
But Guiscard had a father, one much wrong'd
By fortune and by thee.

Tanc. Thanks be to Heaven!

Conrad still lives: of all his large possessions
Full restitution shall be quickly made,
His broken shield shall, to his arm restored,
Be blazon'd with new honours.—Hence with
speed, [to an attendant.

Tell him our fair designs, and bear his age
Far from these scenes of wretchedness and guilt.

Sigis. I am too near my end, and have no voice
To thank you as becomes me.

Tanc. O! my full heart.—

[turns away in tears.

Sigis. You turn away: you surely will not
leave me:

Desert me not.—Soon will my soul take wing,
Ah! now I feel that Death hath icy fingers,—
And round my shivering limbs he seems to fling
A dripping shroud of snow!—The vase—re-
member—

Look where it's fix'd—your oath, that no rude
hand—

Mercy!—what's this I feel?—it throbs—it beats
As it would burst its monument.—I come—

'Thy summons is obey'd.—If I delay,
'Tis to forgive, to bless—to bless my father.

[sinks into Tancred's arms, and dies.]

Tanc. Did you not note those sounds! O all
bear witness,

She did not curse me with her parting breath.
But give her air; perhaps she may but faint;—
Soft—bend her forward;—Medicine may have
powers—

Archb. Vain is thy fond attempt; no art can
break

That everlasting sleep. Mark'd ye, how death
Gently enticed away her willing spirit?

Tanc. I will not add to the enormous weight
Of my foul acts, to wish thee breath, and misery.

Farewell!—farewell!—While I preserve my
senses,

Manfred, to thee I yield the reins of empire.

Deprived of this, yet I have other children,

A numerous people; take them to thy bosom;

Rule with a gentler hand; for my misdeeds

Make reparation.—When your locks, like mine,

Are white with age, O! may you have no cause

To pluck them thus by the roots!—Here turn
thine eyes;

Is't not a sight to move a moment's pity,

To see an aged soldier, once a brave one,

Worn down, unmann'd by sorrow, shame, and
guilt,

Look on his sword, yet be afraid to strike;

And, as the only refuge in his miseries,

Hide, like a coward, thus his hated head?

[he falls on the dead body of his daughter.]

Archb. Forbid the impious despicable thought,
That prompts the murderous act.—Dastards and
infants

Fly any where from pain, the patient Brave

Defy its power; and, ev'n for wounds like thine,

From the same plants which innocence has rear'd,

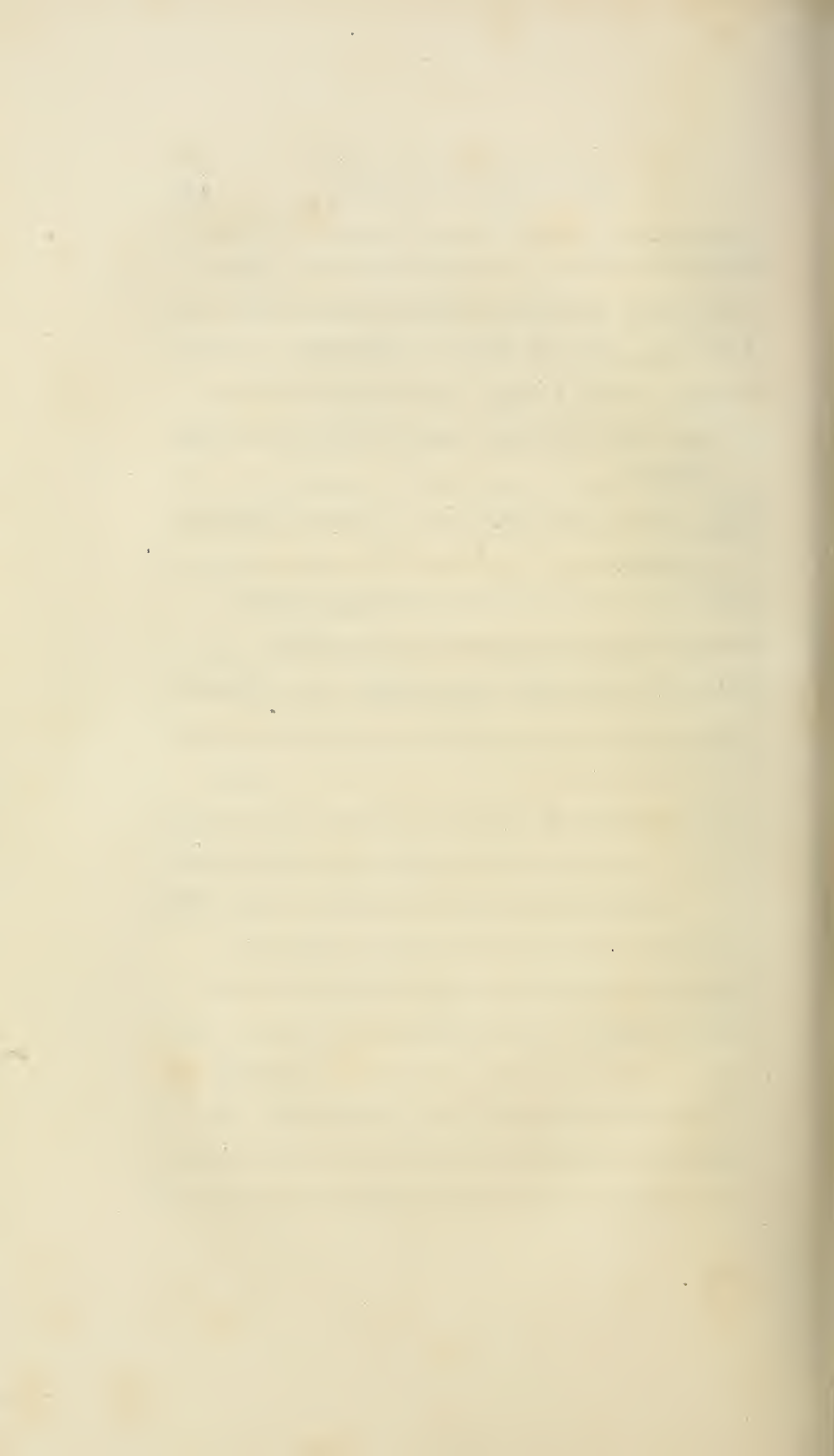
Repentance draws a strength-restoring balm.—
Now gently loose the bonds that thus infold
The living with the dead.—Manfred, in you
Centre a nation's hopes: on the wide ruins
Of our once-splendid house you place your
throne.

Drive from your thoughts all fierce designs of
vengeance,

And guard from insult that unhappy father.

Just punishment is heaven's prerogative;

But erring pity is for erring man! [Exeunt.



THE
STEP-MOTHER.

A
TRAGEDY.



P R E F A C E.

WITHOUT presuming to arraign the popular taste on the subject of theatrical performances, or to hint any opinion of my own on the German Drama, (with which I profess to be but little acquainted,) I flatter myself, no candid British critic will be offended by the acknowledgment, that, in the construction of the fable, or in the conduct of the following scenes, recourse has not been had to recorded history, or to the invention of cotemporary writers. Their works, in this instance, have not been translated, their style of colouring has not been copied, and their plots have been safe from violation.

This attempt, however feeble its execution, to recall the attention of the Public to our own

resources, instead of turning for supplies to foreign warehouses of dramatic treasure, may not be without its use, if it stimulate more active industry, and better ability, to ascertain the fact, whether our own native mines of poetical riches have, in reality, been exhausted; or whether they have not been capriciously neglected.

To those who may possibly take exception at the adventurous introduction of supernatural agency, of beings, who, it may be said, should own no mastery after that of our immortal Shakspeare, I can only apologize by a fair confession of the truth. It appeared to me, that a Tragedy formed upon the strict dramatic model, and without any thing that might supply, in a certain degree, the absence of accustomed noise, machinery, and splendid decoration, would, at this moment, want the power, even in much abler hands than mine, either to invite attention, or to detain curiosity. In a choice of difficulties, therefore, I have risked the charge of presumption, by again bringing

forward those aërial beings, whose powers, as described in the songs of the ancient northern nations, were first employed by our Bard; and I have endeavoured to avail myself of the variety and relief which their appearance may give to these scenes.

I am perfectly aware of the forbearance, which I ought further to bespeak, for the intrusion of characters approaching to the Comic. It is true, indeed, that the great Painters in treating sublime subjects, have produced, on canvas, objects nowise allied to those subjects, and even of a much inferior description. The practice was doubtless adopted, in order to familiarize the spectator's attention, and thus, by the attraction of customary views, however humble and domestic, to carry him forward to the great business of their pencils. In this honest artifice have the Painters allowably indulged. But when I reflect upon the sentence of the master of dramatic criticism,* who, in rigorous disregard of his own practice, has

* Dryden.

pronounced the English Tragi-Comedy to be “wholly Gothic,” I have little hope of deriving any defence from the Sister Art. It is safer, I believe, to solicit, at once, the reader’s indulgence, and to remind him, that the characters in question obtrude but seldom on the scene ; and that those of the lowest cast might perhaps be expunged, without occasioning any material chasm, or even interruption, in the general composition.

PROLOGUE.

*WHEN all the Fiends, that Hell before confined,
Bursting their chains, had leagued against mankind ;
From Gallia's cliffs their brands of vengeance toss'd,
And, with proud vaunts, insulted Albion's coast ;
No wonder that our Muse should drop her lyre,
And, mute with fear, to hidden caves retire.
For she had witness'd from her rocky strand,
The deluge that o'erwhelm'd the neighbouring land ;
Heard, from her heights, the atheist's horrid yell ;
Seen, by foul murder, what sad myriads fell ;
The giant Anarch raise his crest on high,
And rule, and order, in his frowns defy ;
Heard him invite Britannia's sons to share
The impious triumphs of Rebellion's war :
Or bid them, trembling at his tyrant nod,
Crush their loved Monarch, and abjure their God.
No wonder then, to distant climes we turn'd,
And sought that aid, which heretofore we spurn'd ;
Open'd our ports to new poetic wares,
And, from strange sources, drew both smiles and tears :
But since a People's sense has nobly shown,
How they might guard their rights, sustain the Throne,
Avert the course of slaughter from their shores,
And shun that plague, which other realms devours ;*

PROLOGUE.

*In the returning sunshine of our day,
When brighter hopes about our bosom play;
Our Sovereign safe, * (for Heaven itself has spread
No common shelter round his sacred head;)
Unchanged our laws, our altars left to stand,
And Concord breathing patience o'er the land;
Then may we not invite the Muse again,
To tread her stage, and reassume her reign?
To deal her riches from her own full store,
And, on unborrow'd pinions, proudly soar?*

* Referring to the attempt on the King's life, 1800.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

COUNT CASIMIR.

FREDERICK.

ADOLPHUS.

HENRY, COUNT OF BOSINIA.

PERES.

ABBOT.

FRANCIS.

GOTHERD.

SERVANTS OF COUNT CASIMIR.

WOMEN.

COUNTESS CASIMIR.

LOUISA.

ISABELLA.

THE FATAL SISTERS OF THE NORTH.

Scene, Poland; chiefly in the Castle of Count Casimir.

THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT I.

THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A DREARY SPOT IN A FOREST, AMIDST ROCKS AND PINE
TREES, WHERE THE FATAL SISTERS ARE DISCOVERED.—
THE CASTLE OF COUNT CASIMIR SEEN AT A DISTANCE.

Chorus of the Fatal Sisters.

SUMMON'D from the realms of air,
To this spell-defended place ,
Let us to man's devoted race
Thus eternal hatred swear.

1 *Sist.* Before our rites shall be begun,
Sisters, tell me what you've done.
Before, on man's devoted head,
We new-invented torments shed,
Torments he can never shun,
Sisters, tell me what you've done.

2 Sist. Did I do well to snatch
A pregnant snake, with threatening crest,
Hissing o'er its venom'd nest ?

Where do you think I laid it down,
Its slimy eggs to hatch ?

All. Where ? O where ?

2 Sist. In a tyrant's ermined crown.—
O you had smiled with me to have stood,
Arming with double stings the brood :
For, from these spring each sick'ning care,
Cares that to mortals are not known,
Unless they fill a despot's throne.
From these each ill that shortens life,
Public troubles, private strife ;
Contempt from peace, from war despair,
Hatred of foes, of friends distrust ;
And thus I lay the proud in dust.
Did I do well ?

All. Well ! O well !

3 Sist. I caught a mother standing on a height,
Doting on her infant's charms ;
Hid by our power from human sight,
I pluck'd her darling from her arms.
She heard its cries, she saw it sink ;

Then rushing to the fatal brink,
She would have follow'd to the gulph below ;
I held her back—thus perfect was her woe.
Did I do well ?

All. Well ! O well !

4 *Sist.* In the battle's bloody strife,
Thrice I drew the fatal knife,
Young Fred'rick's thread to have cut in twain,
And heap his corse upon the slain ;
But he's reserved for greater woe ;
So Hela bids, as well you know.
Did I do well ?

All. Well ! O well !

1 *Sist.* Now break we off, and let's disperse,
We've to prepare a funeral hearse ;
For, ere the day his course shall run,
Much in yon castle's to be done.
Death's sable goddess meets us there :
Sisters, disperse, and plunge in air.

Chorus of all the Sisters as they rise.

Summon'd from the realms of air

To this spell-defended place ;

Let us to man's devoted race,

Again, eternal hatred swear.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A WOOD. THE MORNING BREAKING. A VIOLENT
STORM.

Enter Francis and Gotherd.

Fran. O mercy, what a night ! Surely the
storm

Don't mean to leave a stick in all the forest,
To make a bonfire for our glad return !

Goth. Now this comes of your night-work—
travelling thus

In bold defiance of sweet sleep and nature.

Lord ! Lord ! to have left the Vicar's fire-
side—

Fran. Aye, and his down-beds too—that
vexes me

'Bove all the rest.

Goth. What will a man not do,
When, by a quicker beating of the heart,
And by a certain lusciousness of the air,
He feels that he approaches a sweet mistress.

Would our young master, with his devilish
haste,

Had been but married, and before he went
To these confounded wars, and then, perhaps,
His hurry had not set us all a scampering
To lose our way, like madmen, in the forest.

Fran. That's very true, good friend. Between
ourselves,

I feel no more impatience—oh ! no more
Than one of our tired mules, to fill again
The arms of my incomparable Dorcas.
'Fore death, I can't help thinking but the elements
Have hired her tongue to save themselves the
trouble

Of thundering.——

[*From within.*]—Holla ! where are you, knaves ?

Enter Frederick, Adolphus, Peres, Attendants.

Fred. Well, gentlemen, have you not found
our horses ?

Fran. We have lost ourselves, and have found
nought so good.

Got. They cannot yet have reach'd the hill—
our path

Brought us a nearer road.

Fred. Tell us, where are we ?

Got. Let's look about—another hour will bring
us

Clear of this cursed wood ; for surely this
Must be the very spot where the boar kill'd
Your Honour's dog, poor Blanch. These distant
lights

Stream from the castle windows, or I'm blind.

Fred. Now may I ask, why have we left our
horses ?

Adolph. By thy advice. They fell at every step.

Fred. I would the tempest, that seems to have
flung

All things unto the moon, had made as free
With my advice.—Now, plague upon these
horses.

Here the road's plain and smooth, and we could
make

Good expedition.

Adolph. I don't marvel much,
To see thee fret and fume thus, when, perhaps,
A little league is all 'twixt thee and heaven.
My Isabella ought to take it ill,

That I'm not leaping like a goat, from crag
To crag, to break my neck, and prove my ardour too.
And yet, perchance, my love's as true as thine.
But there is ever something so forbidding
In that dark witch the Countess, that, though love
Would push me on, yet her inveterate face
Bids me recoil.

Fred. My father's wife! consider—

Adolph. But not thy mother.—Hang her! She
loves thee

As I love her— I never can approach her,
But, in a moment, something that she says
Or does, raises my bile, and, for a fortnight,
Spoils my digestion.

Fred. O my friend, be patient,
For my sake, and my father's, I entreat you ;
We have not long to suffer from her temper.
—The storm; methinks, increases !

Peres. There's a crash !
That monarch oak fell as a king should fall—
No mean survivor of his people's ruin !

Fred. Mercy, good Doctor—to be moralizing
Thus in a whirlwind !

Peres. This same storm reminds me—

Just in so rude a night—of an occurrence
The most remarkable. I'll tell you, Sir,
All the particulars——

Fred. Not for the world, Sir !
Some other time—some other time.

Peres. Well, well—
'Tis a sad pity, 'tis not somewhat lighter.
A dainty spot for botanizing this.
I've heard it said, that great Professor Boreman—

Fred. He's off again—Of this there is no end.
Peres, good night !—If here you mean to sleep,
I am not of your party.—On, Adolphus.

[*Exeunt all, except Peres and Francis.*]

Peres. My good friend, Francis, you perhaps
would choose
To hear about Professor Boreman ? Truly,
'Tis a most sad and interesting story.

Fran. O dear ! not I, Sir.—Will you jog on,
Doctor,
Or, by yourself, be frozen here to death ?
Surely, the man is deaf !—Why, what can you
Be thinking of ?

Peres. Why, I was thinking what
Professor Boreman's age might be, when——

Fran. Heavens !

This fool will lose himself, and, what's much worse,

Me too !—For God's sake, Doctor, come away !

[*Pushing him off. Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

THE COUNTESS CASIMIR'S APARTMENT.

Countess, Henry.

Countess. [*reading a paper.*] 'Tis well ! exceeding well !—This his last wish
Mark what a web of poverty is spun
For me ! Thus, thus am I repaid for years
Of bitter pain and suffering !—Whence this paper ?

Hen. Forever watchful where your interests point,
Of late I've mark'd, about the castle skulking,
That human vampire, the attorney, Peter.
Unnoticed, I soon traced the subtle mischief.
Up to your husband's closet, there took leave

To listen, but to hear if aught was brewing
Injurious to a cause to me so dear;
Enough I gain'd to make me seize th' occasion,
Afforded by the night, to search his cabinet—
You know I am expert—and there I found
This plan of future ruin.

Countess. O how just !

He in his grave, and blasting, by this act,
All the bright hopes on this side mine !—He
leaves me

The scanty means of wearing out my years
In this detested land—the noble gift !
Furies and death ! observe the disposition—
Here to waste half my life, and then to view
The termination of this lively prospect
Closed in by beggary !

Hen. 'Tis a foul wrong.—

You, who, by splendid talents, first procured
Honours and wealth ; gave to his lavish hand
Extensive territories ; thus repairing
The gaping chasms that wild extravagance
Had worn in all his tatter'd fortunes—truly
You are most injured !

Countess. Look but at these walls—

You can remember, how I lived at Warsaw !
What fill'd my chambers there ! What hourly
crowds,

Wearing the pavements of my palace courts !
Crosiers, and truncheons, glitt'ring orders, bending
The marble stair-case ! Merit and Disgrace,
Ambition, Interest, Power—struggling, all,
For the short heaven of a toilet-whisper !
Envoys and ministers from every state
That had a name in the globe ! Ephemeral
beings,

Opening their gawdy pinions as I smiled,
Or to my frown yielding their flutt'ring lives !

Hen. Long on that glorious pinnacle, I view'd
thee

Sublimely seated ; (and I knew its price.) [*Aside.*

Countess. Behold me here, sad partner of a
bed

Haunted by all the dæmons of disgust,
Contempt, and hate !—daily condemn'd to hear,
Not what rival Eagles of the North
Are rip'ning into form ;—not, if the Turk
Bursts his seraglio stupor ;—not, if Spain,
With France, is stealing, with insidious step,

On unsuspecting Europe—nor, if England
Rears her proud trident on her rocky cliffs,
And bids the universal world obey !—
Instead of these,—the poacher's war, the intrigues
And plots of village against village ! or
The deep caballings of a convent parlour !
Then, that eternal, horrible detail
Of mountain-chases !—Was I made for this ?

Hen. I own it is too much for human bearing.

Countess. And now the glow-worm Hope, that
sometimes cast

Its trembling rays upon this horrid night,
And whisper'd, that, when riot and debauchery
Had much advanced what Nature's common
course

Had placed at no great distance, I should then
Regain my lost condition ;—by this work—
This work of hell—this fatal instrument—
Is utterly destroy'd—oh ! dead, for ever !
What's to be done ?

Hen. Suppose another deed,
Aping this villainy, but with th' inverse
Of the accurs'd intention—it were easy
To make it take the place of this.

Countess. But stay !

Should he detect the forgery, we're lost,
For ever lost. What if he die intestate ?

Hen. By Poland's law, then all you brought
your Lord

Reverts to you again.

Countess. And say you so ?

Henry,—he never makes another will.

Hen. Prithee, explain !

Countess. How dull !—Thus, with its merits—
[tearing the will.

My husband must not make another will.

But soft, we're interrupted !—Quick ! be gone !
You know the private way. Be not seen here.

SCENE IV.

Enter Louisa and Isabella.

Countess. O my young friends, how beauteous
you appear,

When every rising sun adds but fresh fragrance
To my sweet opening roses ! [embracing them.

Isa. Here's base flattery !

Her compliments are pioneers, but sent
To cut a road before the approaching censure.

I tremble for the sequel. [*Aside.*]

Louisa. O, good madam,
You are too partial. 'Tis this easy life,
This castle's wholesome site, and—

Countess. Why avoid
Praise you deserve ! here, I confess, you're match-
less.

But don't mistake me so, to think I mean,
Leaving this solitude, as leave you will,
And, much too soon for happiness, engage
In the world's dang'rous paths, that you'll not
meet

Faces as fair as yours, and graceful forms
Of most refined elegance, of which
You yet, indeed, have small conception.

Louisa. Truly,
We do not doubt it.

Isa. Answer for yourself,
My meek Louisa ; I'll stay to be convinced.

Countess. 'Tis there, my friends, I speak it for
your good,

(Not that I think the case will e'er be yours,) That many a husband, some that pass for good,
Breaking the chains that rural beauty twines,
Forget the vows, that woods and streams have witness'd;

You deem me now severe—but 'tis my love Dictates this caution. [*embracing them again.*

Isa. Here's our beauty gone!

Our husbands too are false, and ere we have them! [*Aside.*

Countess. This day, our letters teach, Lord Frederick comes,

Cover'd with well-earn'd laurels, to receive His dearest recompence, Louisa's hand.
What praise of spirit, modesty, and skill,
Fill'd each dispatch from our victorious army!

Louisa. I knew it would be so.

Is there a virtue,
Truth, honour, firmness, pure ambition's fire,
That share not empire in my Frederick's breast!
But are these all! Ah, no—each gentler feeling,
Which clear unspotted courage dares give way to,

When more suspicious valour loudly boasts,
It sheds no tears of weakness.

Countess. You but speak
All that I think, nay, know, of his perfections :
And though I own his excellence beyond
All general rule, that your young soldiers prove
But faithless mates, not quitting their wild pranks ;
Yet, to ensure your comfort, I had wish'd
He'd taken another walk of life, not risking
The heart, that should be yours, amidst the
wiles,
Of ambush'd syrens in those dangerous climes ;
To which, alas ! sweet innocence like yours,
In fancy ne'er has reach'd. But, dearest child,
You seem unwell—what have I said !

Louisa. Indeed,
I did not look for being vex'd to-day—
To-day, that brings my Frederick to us all.

Countess. You much mistake me ; 'twas my
tender care
That warn'd you of a storm that might arise,
And spoil the surface of a summer sea,
On which your novice bark glides unprepared
For change of seasons. But I leave you now—

The hour arrives, when, with my vows to heaven,
ven,

I scatter, o'er the neighbouring village poor,
That charitable aid, than which God's altars
Receive not sweeter incense. All the saints
Have you in their good keeping !

[*Embracing them. Exit Countess.*]

Isa. There she goes,
To make e'en charity itself disgusting !
Her charity's too like our litter mules,
That sound their bells along the public way,
To attract the notice of the gaping hamlet :
While thine, with dove-like flight, on noiseless
wing

Skims o'er each cottage, and on each roof drops,
In secret, its sweet balm.—But, dear Louisa,
Let not her malice grieve you. Your loved
Frederick

This day returns : our odious narrow cage
Will soon fly open ; we no more the sport
Of that strange woman's humour !

Louisa. Isabella,
We must not, cannot part ! We know, Adol-
phus

Is not forsworn : one house may surely stretch
Its walls to hold four friends like us.

Isa. Be that

As Heaven ordains ! and should he prove un-
true,

I'll bear it as I may ; and from thy friendship
Taste as much bliss as love may have to give
me.

No, no ! we will not part. I can be useful ;
Attend thee like a nurse, when Frederick's
duty

Shall tear him from thy arms ; then conjure
down

Ill-founded fears ; foretell the hour, the minute,
Of his return ; scold thee, or laugh thee out of
The visionary wounds thy love provides him.

I may instruct thy children ; and each day
Light, in their little hearts, the noble flame
Of emulating thee. So, sweetest friend,
If I'm condemn'd to twine the willow-garland,
I'm not without resources.

Louisa. Isabella,

Without thy cheerful aid, thy poor Louisa
Shrinks like the tenderest flower at ev'ry wind ;

And, even now, she has a puzzled sense
Of coming evils—oh ! too much like that
Which a sick, feeble mem'ry loves to hang on,
When struggling to recall past woe. Come, laugh,
Or scold her, as thou wilt, for this sad weakness.
[*Exeunt.*

THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT II.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A HALL IN CASIMIR'S CASTLE.

*Servants, meeting Gotherd and Francis.**1 Serv.* Welcome, most welcome, Gotherd !

Welcome, Frank !

Where is our dear young master ? How's his wound ?

He is not lame ? He does not halt ? God bless him,
Though he should come on crutches !*Got.* If I had

A thousand voices, I would answer you

While he alights from horseback. Come, dispatch ;

Acquaint Lord Casimir we're all arrived ;

And fail not to say *all*. He must have been

In sad alarm, lest some of our wise heads

Had been left grinning o'er a Turkish gate-way.

Serv. Art thou for grinning, thou hadst better
taken

That Eastern mode than any thou'lt find here.
To tell thee a great secret, we've forgot
All of us how to grin. There's Madam Countess
Cannot away with mirth ; wit's contraband ;
We dare not smuggle it with our gin and brandy ;
And so we all get drunk in sober sadness.

Fran. Alas ! alas ! that's much—but times
will change :

These things must all be alter'd. How's the vin-
tage ?

Cellars well stock'd ?—Though, as the poets say,
We soldiers love the roaring of great guns,
The neighing of war-horses, and of matrons
Violated, and all such martial noises ;
Yet I can so accommodate my senses,
As, in the drawing of a cork, to find
A very comely sound. What say you, lads ?

Enter other Servants.

Serv. As I do live, they're met on the hall-
steps,
And now hard at it, pulling, kneeling, kissing,
Questioning, answering ; and the old house-dog

Knows our young Lord, and seems more glad
than any,
Saving our sweet young lady.—Here they come!

S C E N E II.

*Enter Casimir, Frederick, Adolphus, Peres,
Countess, Louisa, Isabella, Attendants.*

Cas. You've made good haste. I was afraid
the letter,
That must have reach'd you, as you pass'd through
Warsaw,
Might, for some days, have given you employ-
ment
With our first Minister.

Fred. He was then absent.
And his arrival for this month postponed,
I deem'd it not your pleasure, I had waited.

Cas. [*aside.*] O that you had! thus I had
gain'd some days
Of value beyond measure.

Louisa. But this wound!

You hardly mention'd it ; then the fatigue,
The weather, and the roads ; alas ! you should
Have travell'd slower.

Peres. Soft.—As for the wound,
I can best speak to that : I can describe
Most accurately the nature of the hurt.
But first, young lady, you must learn the course
That a ball took in Marshal Mouskin's hip ;
Almost a homogenous case, except
With the nice difference of the injury
To the os pubis, and the great trochanter—

Fred. O this abuses all indulgence ! Peace,
As you respect clean straw and hellebore.
The man is surely crazed ! Is this a season—

Cas. If you would hear of wounds, of perilous
chances,
Of valour and of strength, of men whose sinews
Were twisted, like a cable, by the hand
Of Nature, and were form'd by her to bend not
Under such iron coats as now would crush
To atoms all the modern pigmy race,
You must look back to seasons, when our
Poles
Had men to struggle with !

Sons of our northern Serpent, Swedes and Russians,

Another race ! How different from your Turk,
Reeling and nerveless from his haram-conflicts,
Ill-stomaching the change of the down sofa
And scented bath, for the straw-litter'd tent !
And still you call yours—War !

Adolph. You much mistake,
My Lord ; granting, that, since your famous
times,

The human race has undergone a sweating,
As has our coin, and now has little value ;
Yet, had you witness'd—

Fred. O no more of this !
Indulge his humour.

Adolph. 'Tis a cursed one :—
But, for thy sake—

Countess. We're wont to hear, all things,
In his conceit, are verging to decay.
The very ice is not with equal thickness
Ribb'd, as in his good days : the sun itself
Now yields, in potency of heat and splendour,
To the poor peasant's stove. Excuse this fancy ;
I know he means you no ungracious welcome.

Adolph. [*aside.*] As hearty as your own, or
I'm mistaken.

Cas. Let us retire. Our northern air must
needs

Affront the nerves, distended and untuned
By Asia's steaming winds. Prithee, let's in.
I know your modern traveller wants recruits
That nature formerly could well dispense with.
[*Exeunt, excepting Adolphus and Isabella.*]

SCENE III.

Adolphus and Isabella.

Adolph. One word, for mercy, dearest Isabella!

Isa. Be quick—I tarry but a moment : use it
With your old frankness ; and pray tell me fairly,
Without a prologue of esteem and friendship,
And such most wintry terms, that you adore
me—

O more than all our lovely sex besides,
One, only one, excepted !—Is't not so ?

Adolph. O no, my charming mistress ! Do but
hear me.

I now can tell you, that the heart, which swell'd
With bitterest anguish, when first banish'd hence,
Returns to be restored to happiness,
To love, delight, and thee.

Isa. All this is fine,
O very fine to hear ! But yet, methinks,
You might as well have made me guess your
meaning
A little sooner.

Adolph. I confess a weakness ;
But, while the Countess' present, nor my thoughts,
Nor are my words my own. I feel quite lost
In that dark maze, whose windings I pursue,
Without a thread to catch her secret meanings.
Forgive me, Isabella ; I'm ashamed,
In such a fruitless inquest to be occupied.
Why do I yield to this antipathy ?

Isa. To feel it for a toad or spider—creatures
That, for the humble place where Nature's placed
them,
Bespeak our pity rather than our hate—
Is most preposterous ! But for that woman,

Heaven gives us hate, for instinct, to avoid her.
I feel, before I see her, like the bird
That, trembling at the rising storm, would fain
House any where to shun its distant fury.

Adolph. Then I am not so singular in this—

Isa. I and my dear Louisa, in your absence,
Have vegetated here ; if sometimes warm'd
By the false heat of her officious kindness,
Yet quickly to be crush'd, like hateful weeds
That curse the pasture. Wanting other food
To satiate her intriguing appetites,
She seeks dominion o'er each neighb'ring castle ;
And, with her Warsaw maxim, to divide
And rule, spreads every where domestic jars ;
In the calm bosom of each peaceful family
Lights the curst torch of discord.—Now no more :
We are here alone ; we soon may be enquired
for.

Our conference will excite her jealousy,
And we shall feel her vengeance.—Follow me.—

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A long Gallery in Casimir's Castle.

Cas. [solus.] To turn to death for aid, rather
than wait

Age or disease's course ; and any where
To fix the point of fortune's compass, rather
Than watch with throbbing breast, and straining
eyes,

The irritating tremblings of its needle,
(Though hope should sink for ever) is far happier
Than on such waves of doubt to toss ! The child
Who, with his irresolute foot, first touches
The chilling ripples of the stream, from shame
Calls up a soul, and plunges in. Shall man,
Proud man, stand undecided on the bank ?
Forbid it, courage !—Ere the sun decline,
I must resign for ever young Louisa,
Or make her mine—Mine she shall be !—Be still,
Compunction's cozening voice !—Is it for me,
With all a mountain's weight of sins upon me,

To shrink before this ant-hill of offence !
Mine she must be—but how ?—O by what
means ?

First Sister entering from the Bottom of the stage.

1 *Sist.* By prompt decision.

Cas. What do I behold !

A female form ! Could a substantial being,
Encumber'd with our clay, glide through the
crevice

Of this thick masonry ? For, from that quarter,
No mortal can approach !

1 *Sis.* That I do hold

The master-key of all thy secret purposes,
And have in solemn keep the visitation
Of thy heart's inmost cell, will by thyself
Be freely own'd.—Listen !—to me is known
The very hour when, first, Sense, Reason, Pru-
dence,

Impell'd by Love's hot breath, mounted the air
And, like the silky gossamer, appear'd
No more.—Was not the Turkish war a scheme

To profit of thy son's and rival's absence ?
And he returns too soon—Is it not so ?

Cas. What answer can I make, but that, in
hell,

Thou hast seen blazon'd all my deep intents !
No tenant of our planet has access
To what lies darkly buried in this bosom.

I Sist. Enquire not what I am. If a thin spirit,
Permitted here to take my fancy's range ;
Or, if these marble walls expand and close,
As I do bid them, from a magic power ;
Or if, without such supernatural aid,
I have contrived to break upon thy privacy ;
Still view me thy protecting Genius. Long,
Long I have watch'd thy bolder walk through life,
And seen thee snap the chains which others
bind ;

Bound o'er the loftiest fence, to win the joys
That heaven has made for man ; nor turn aside
To shun the nothings of a monkish censure.
Does it become thee, Casimir, now to pause,
And not pursue the noblest, easiest prey !

Cas. Say'st thou—Louisa easy to be won !
Whene'er I venture to approach, her innocence

Ruins my utt'rance. Though in thy strange presence,

I own I stand not inaccessible

To an unusual awe ; yet something still

Of Casimir remains.—'Fore her, he's fled,

And coward dotage takes the shape he leaves !

I Sist. O these are love-sick scruples, idle qualms.

Are there no other means to gain on beauty

But distant sighs and tears ; losing this hour,

And thinking that to-morrow will expressly

Rise more propitious for the soft disclosure ?

Away ! away, Lord Casimir ! This want

Of enterprising fire renders my aid

Of no avail. Let, then, the glorious harvest

Of sweet Louisa's charms be borne away

To fill another's garner, while tame Casimir

Dares not dispute the prize within his reach.

Cas. Within my reach ! Will youth and beauty turn,

When Saturn wooes, from a young Phœbus' prayer ?

I Sist. But, strength and power would seize the destined prey,

And leave a novice boy to whine his loss.

'Tis force must make her your's—

Cas. Ah! what say'st thou?

Force? And what hope from that?

1 Sist. We know, all women

Do not abhor ther ravishers. Is not

The neighb'ring country thine? Madness dares
not

Oppose a Polish mandate.

*[While Casimir is plunged in thought,
the first Sister retires by the way she
entered.]*

Cas. *[not perceiving that she is gone.]* But what
if I attempt? By heaven, she's fled!

And by the road she seem'd at first to enter!

She this way pass'd not by. The known entrance

Is here, and only here. Perhaps I've been

Conversing with some damned soul, that buys

An absence from its prison-house, on the bond

Of bringing others to its fiery mansion,

And I must be the pledge! Yet to resign her,

To give her up, to hear no more her voice!

Never again to view those beaming eyes

Chase, like another sun, the night that hangs

On war-worn towers like these ! nor Nature watch
At her best, proudest work, swelling each charm
Till healthful, full-blown youth expand no further !
To have that beauteous idol far removed,
That, while I gazed and worshipp'd, made me
bear
With unmoved soul, and inattentive ear,
The constant din of keen connubial rancour !
How to recede !—The Indian, on the brink
Of the immense Canadian cataracts,
Could easier stem those waters, and return,
Than I can travel back. Inhabitant
Of this or other worlds, thou art obey'd ! [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

Adolphus, Peres.

Adolph. Peres, well met ! How like you your
abode ?

Peres. It speaks magnificence and strength.
The mead,
That spreads its velvet level far below,

I do conjecture, teems with many a plant
Most welcome to a stranger's eye ; besides,
Yon mountains, doubtless, are possess'd of stores
Of mineral treasures, hidden yet from man.

Adolph. I'm speaking of the castle—the possessors :

What think you of our noble hosts ?

Peres. Most luckily,

I am read in physiognomy : a science
Well worthy cultivation ; which protects us
From many a mischief and disgrace, that flow
From too much confidence in words and actions.
Steering by this, in silence, I avoid
The rocks that others split on in their course.

Adolph. If you're so wise, I would be fain inform'd

What you pronounce of the Lord Casimir ?

Peres. Judging like vulgar men, I should decide,

He was imperious, proud, cruel in nature,
Prompt to offend, implacable in anger—
Would govern all things with a master's rule,
Except his passions.

Adolph. [*aside.*] He has hit the mark,

And could not have said better, had he lived
Whole years beneath this roof.

Peres. But, by my art
And nearer inquest, in his nether lip
I do perceive benevolence. His nostrils
Do not expand with a contemptuous snort
Of proud disdain, but with a lively breathing,
Impell'd by love of all the human race.
His eyes, to some may flash with sparks of rage;
Not so to me. Their fury is directed
But to the foes of virtue. Thus I learn,
And do aver, he is a worthy gentleman.

Adolph. A famous end hast thou, in truth, made
of it,
And to a fair commencement: now, good Doctor,
Show equal knowledge of his better half.

Peres. That is an easy task; for here no art
Spreads its thin lawn o'er the small specks and
foibles
Most are constrain'd to hide; much less is wanted
The thicker veil to cast o'er grosser stains.

Adolph. O Lord! O Lord!—The penetrating
skill—

Peres. A novice in our science would discover

In the convexity of the forehead,
A store-house of deep thought ; but that thought
given

To things of heavenly kind, to lovely charity,
To penitence and prayer. The nose might lead
To an ill-founded fear, that stiff disdain
And vain conceit sat on its rising arch ;
But then the sweet formation of the mouth
Proves, nought but meekness, gentleness, and
truth,

Harbours in her fair bosom.—Then her ear :
Mark'd you the tip of her left ear ?

Adolph. Enough,
Enough !—You clearly show, beyond dispute,
The excellence of your art.

Peres. Truly, I knew
I should convince you.

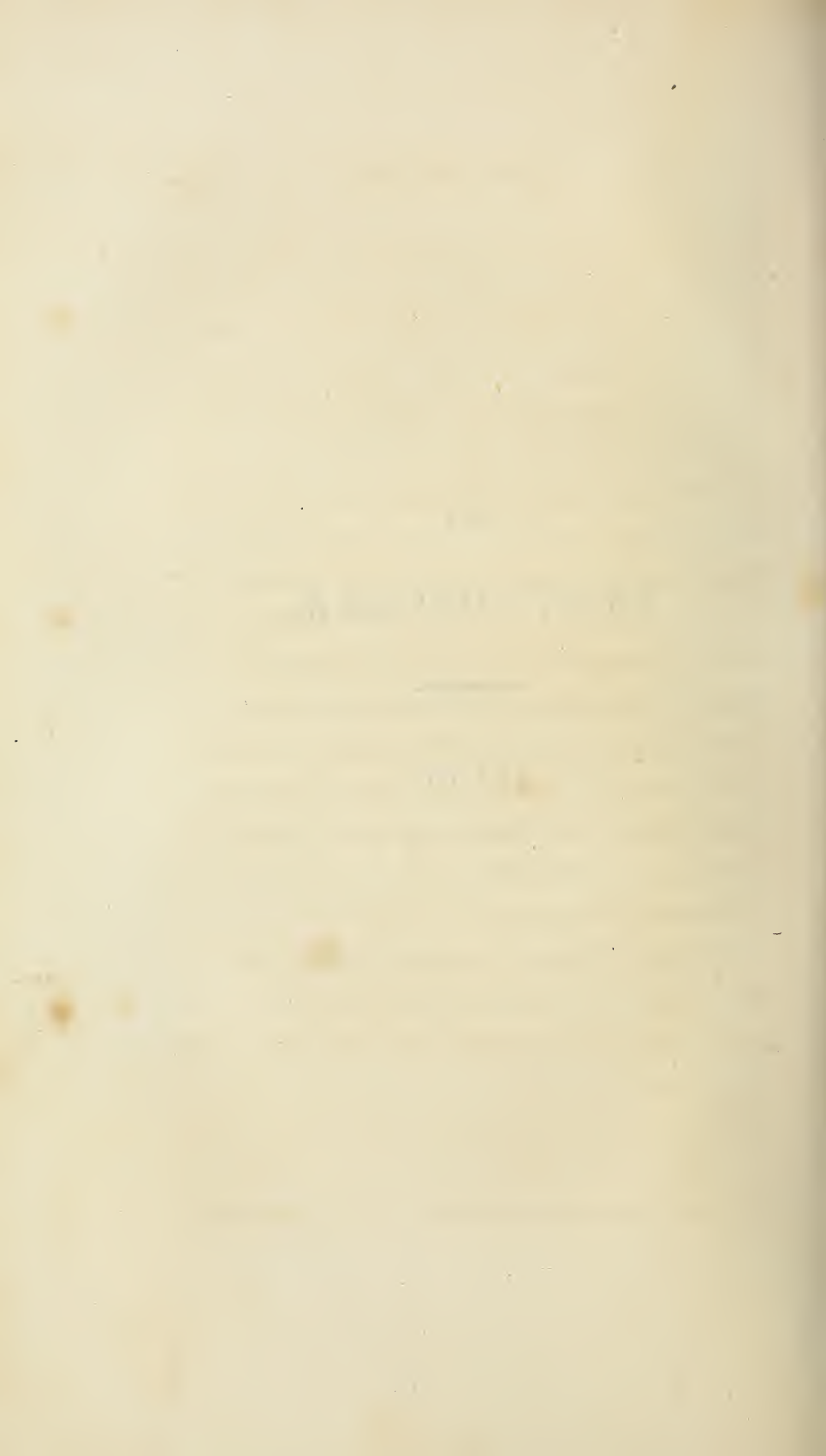
Adolph. Well,—I'll be your pupil.
In the mean time, we will go in to dinner.

[*Exeunt.*



THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT III.



ACT III. SCENE I.

The Countess's Apartment.

Countess. [*alone.*] Had he but cast into my
drinking-cup

The deadly nightshade—had he but let out,
With his avenging sword, my heart's warm blood,
And so at once had crush'd his enemy—
Might well, when nature pleaded for itself,
Admit of pardon. But, rotting in the tomb,
And, when the glorious sense of great revenge
Was felt no more—to rob me from the grave—
To subject me to pain—'midst provinces,
Abundant farms, and populous cities,
All which I gave; to make me crouch in the hut
Of beggary, a mendicant's asylum—
And, when his shrouded eyes no more could
feast,

With execrable joy, on the oppression,
Still to oppress—O this dissolves all ties !
Makes vengeance righteous!—Now, Lord Casimir,

It is become a striving race between us :
One, and one only, can enjoy the prize ;
That prize is life ;—and death must have a victim !

Enter Lord Henry.

Countess. Welcome, Lord Henry ! Since the
fresh coming
Of our new guests, say, what has thy keen
search
Collected for our use ? Know, circumstances,
That, single, trifling seem, together heap'd,
Become a mass for notice.

Hen. In that spot,
Where we all met this morning, you'll believe
The observer glean'd but little.—'Twas a scene
To raise one's mirth.—Mark'd you your hus-
band's joy,
How real, how sincere ? All the hasty questions,
That saved the answerer's breath ? Can you
divine,
Why Frederick's presence could be well dispensed
with ?

Countess. The parent's hate of every thing allied

To virtue or fair conduct, conjures up
A stern upbraider of his life, in all
Who wallow not in his polluted litter :
And in this son he views a censurer
Of all his actions. Where is then the wonder
His absence had been pardon'd ?

Hen. Something yet
Remains to be explain'd. Late, I've remark'd
The various altars, which your Lord had raised
Around this place to wild unlicensed love,
All have been neglected—No presents now,
In secret, are dispatch'd, as formerly,
Each morning, to the city. What's more—safely,
The village beauty meets him in her path ;
Nor has, some nine months after, to deplore,
She took that dang'rous road. This sudden
change

I've well observed. Say, have you not suspected,
Some new attraction draws him from his haunts ?

Countess. If I esteem'd him, then, perchance, I
could

Be jealous for his honour, and be studious
To hide such brutish weakness from the world ;
Or if the trembling flame of foolish fondness

Still warm'd this injured heart ; why then, indeed,
I might employ a leisure hour to note
The fleeting, quick succession of my rivals !
Where no affection warms the lifeless soil,
How can the roots of jealousy be cherish'd ?

Hen. If, in the course he steers, should be conceal'd

Whirlpools and rocks, and dangers big with death,

Should *we* the Pharos light, and from the shore
Direct him safe, nor feast our eager view
Upon his certain ruin, while we aloof
Stand safe and unsuspected ?—Now, attend—
If, in the riot of distemper'd blood,
He lifts his eyes to young Louisa's charms,
To tear her from his son's and rival's bosom !
When once love's fire is kindled in his veins,
We know the ravage that it makes.—Observe,
To what this leads.

Countess. I can imagine peril,
The vengeance of her kindred, proud and powerful,

Bloodshed, and death, to follow in the train
Of such outrageous acts ! Yet these may be

Far at a distance placed—He may escape—
What then becomes of us? Besides, how know
you,
That he conceives a project so atrocious?

Hen. Soon as the return of Frederick was announced,
He could contain no longer; an hour since,
Of all the caskets to repose the treasure
Of his oppressive secrets, chose my bosom.
You may be certain, that I urged not aught
To bend him from his purpose, when th' attempt
Might quickly draw on an event, in which
All your fall'n hopes would rise again from darkness.

Countess. I have not now the time, to weigh
the advantage
All this may offer—and yet 'tis a tree,
On which may ripen most important fruit,
Though now 'tis but in blossom. O reflect,
How ev'ry moment crumbles off a fragment
From the thin edge we stand on! If he find
We have purloin'd the paper—

Hen. Well I know,
Our lives must be the forfeit.

Countess. O Lord Henry !

The time *has been*, when thy intrepid soul,
Thy executing hand—Is there no way,
To shun our danger ?

Hen. Ah ! how wild that look !
How thy breast labours with some dreadful pro-
ject !

What would'st thou have me do ?

Countess. Hast thou forgot
Henriques ? Fear we now, the indiscretion
Of *his* incautious tongue ? Did we much err
When we agreed, the dark cemented tomb
Was fitter to entrust with certain secrets,
Than that light babbler's breast ? Alas, for shame !
Why, at that name, does such a creamy paleness
Chase from thy manly cheek its better hue ?

Hen. [*turning aside.*] I would not understand
you.

Countess. Come, Lord Henry,
Affect not dulness thus ! What would'st thou do,
Wert thou to find another on a plank,
And the wide ocean ready to receive thee ?
Would'st thou not seize the place, where only
one

Could ride in safety, and dislodge the wretch,
Hadst thou the power? And does Lord Casimir
Deserve that we should sink for him?—for him
Who works our ruin?—when the slightest push
Conveys us into safety? What, resign
For him, wealth, honour, pleasures, life itself!—
By whose hand fell Henriques?

Hen. O, by mine!

By mine!

Countess. And, if by thine, has coward Nature
Howl'd, from her frighten'd caverns, condemna-
tion

Of that surprizing deed? How many thousands
Are daily from life's muster-roll struck off,
To fix some base usurper on a throne?
Our sacrifice was one—one for our safety:
War sweeps its millions to secure a tyrant,
Or prop a falling minister!—The sun
Rises, to my perception, as he did,
In wonted majesty—the sable night,
In cold indifference to our simple act,
Flings the same cloak about her. I have heard
Of no convulsive heavings of the tomb,
To set its tenant free, and scare our slumbers.

Hen. Thy rest, then, has been tranquil? calm
thy nights

And days?

Countess. What should disturb them?

Hen. The pale form
That's never absent from these tortured eyes.

Countess. O childish vision!—And you view
this spectre?

Hen. Oh! I have seen it take all shape and
size!—

Sometimes, as it did fill the mortal case
That nature gave to it—Anon, 'twould dwindle
Into so small a speck, that I have marvell'd,
How, with my eyes, I have pursued its changes!
And yet, in that appalling miniature,
Most horribly distinct!—Lady, have done
With blood!—Again; it was but yesterday,
As I do live, it met me like a giant;
Striding the valley's space!—'Twas outline all,
For substance it had none: through its grey film,
I view'd the distant prospect; yet there was
One spot opaque—one spot that sadly marked
Where once a noble heart had beat—but now,
Wither'd and gone! In that dark bed of gore,

You might have found the dagger that you lent
me.

Lady, no more of blood !—no more of blood !

Countess. O !—to have trusted to this baby
man——

Henriques knew too much, and therefore died !

This slave is deeper taught, and, from his bed,

Still hopes to be dismiss'd into his grave

Secure, though well he knows this daring hand.

But I, a prophetess of certain skill,

Tell him, his days are number'd— [*Aside.*

I was thinking,

My good Lord Henry, of all thou hast urged,

And, in my own sad bosom, find the seeds

Of strong compunction. Oh ! thou hast cleft my
heart,

Struck thy keen arrow in the destined mark,

And touch'd a fiery nerve that stings my brain

With agony !—We'll turn to milder courses ;

And, when we dare, we'll sue to heaven for
mercy ! [*Exit Countess.*

SCENE II.

Hen. I like not this quick turning.—Souls,
like her's,
That have so long been plunged in the murky
night
Of barbarous crimes, endure not, on the sudden,
The dazzling rays of virtue, but must pass
Through purifying stages of repentance,
The tardy-paced gradations of contrition,
Before, towards the glorious luminary,
They venture to look up. Alas ! this truth
Lies here too deep !

SCENE III.

Enter Abbot and Attendants.

Abbot. Peace to these ancient walls !
Blest peace to all beneath this ample roof,
Prosperity, and happiness !

Hen. Most welcome,
Good father !—Many a long day has pass'd,
Since, last, you graced this mansion.

Abbot. Such an absence
I had not deem'd observed—Age, and my duties,
Confine me to a narrow space. Besides,
Here, the divisions of the day and night
Ill suit the fashions of our formal house.
When I am watching, in the freshen'd air,
Day's splendid rise ; the renovated taper,
For the continued revel, cheats my sense ;
I view a double morning.—O, believe me,
I'm better at a distance—Own, Lord Henry,
Things which I cannot mend, I must not witness.
I mean you no offence. Old age is stubborn.
This day, I learn, returns my dearest Frederick,
My pupil, and my pride. Once more again,
I'd clasp him in these arms.—Is he arrived ?

Hen. A few hours since he gladden'd this
abode ;
And, if I know him, will not be found tardy
To prove he's mindful of your tender care,
Nor wanting, for your sage instruction, grati-
tude.

Abbot. I labour'd hard, and have reap'd golden fruit.

Men of the world think the foundation weak,
On which I raised in him the superstructure
Of scholar and of gentleman. I own
It was Religion ; and, without a blush,
I here confess it—deem'd it such a rock,
As would defy, unshaken, all assailants ;
Not only proof 'gainst the light scoffing gales
Of modern pert philosophy, but a match
For all the deeper howlings and foul noises,
That, from the unbeliever's portico,
Rush on the astonish'd world.
'Twas from this adamant base, I view'd
Unshaken honour, and aspiring science,
Take their proud spring ; and, providence be
praised,
Hopes of a sanguine mind have not been blasted !
Himself has added to the unfinish'd work
A well-wrought pinnacle of martial glory.

Hen. O good Lord Abbot !—if you love young
Frederick——

Abbot. Do I exist ! you know how well I love him,
And with paternal fondness.

Hen. You are apprized,
Ere long he weds the beautiful Louisa?

Abbot. A jewel for a prince's diadem!
How much a nobler portion in her virtue
And blushing modesty, than all she bears
Of her extensive fortunes!

Hen. Would you be
His guardian angel, snatch him quick from ruin;
Pursue him till he yield to your entreaties—
Hastening the nuptial rites—to bear away,
From this infected air, his lovely treasure!

Abbot. You speak in riddles. Why this haste?—
this caution?

Hen. I can explain no further—But, remember,
To-morrow should not break, and find him here.
[*Exit Henry.*]

Abbot. I know this man, and never could approve him.

Banish'd to this retreat, he keeps the practice
Of his old rules of cunning and design;
Lest, when returning to the world, he should
Have the first elements of artifice
To study o'er again.—But, he was moved;

Nay, and the intruder Honesty seem'd bustling
In its new lodgings, an old courtier's bosom.—
But here's my boy !

Enter Frederick.

Fred. [*kneeling.*] Your blessing, honour'd father.

Abbot. That to this hour I've lived ! that I
behold thee !

Thus press thee to this bosom ! I feel grateful
To Him to whom all gratitude is due !

O tell me—it will please me—had I died
During thy absence, and that chance had led thee
Where thy old master slept, thou would'st not,
Frederick,

Have pass'd his grave without a moment's pause,
The pause of dear affection—nature's pause—

Time for the heart to heave, and sink again ?

This is not wholesome talk. I need not weep :

True, I'm fatigued ; and my weak, trembling
flame

Can only burn where all is hush'd and quiet.

Sorrow and joy are both for me too mighty :

I'm chaff before such whirlwinds.—I pray you,
Conduct me to that seat.

Fred. You want the balm,
The cordial of your friend's officious care ;
These will preserve you for us. My Louisa
Shall fling into your cup the soft ingredients
Of never-ceasing kindness ; and with prayers,
That must reach heaven, you'll repay her love.

Enter Louisa.—Kneels to the Abbot.

Abbot. Arise, my child. In these few words,
accept

Th' extent of all my vows—May'st thou, in soul,
Continue thus of saint-like purity,
For that will flourish when those roses fade ;
And time, that must not even spare those charms,
Will steal them, unperceived, away, if that
Retain its ermine whiteness.—Though I'm not
Often here found, yet I remark thy steps,
And watch thy cherub flight. Is there a cheek,
Late pale with grief, that glows again with
crimson—

Is there a hovel, where late squalid poverty

Lay rolling in the straw of loathsome sickness,
That smiles again in health and comfort ? Turn
Where'er I will, thy care, thy generous care,
I find, has been before me ! If I visit
The debtor's sad abode, thy hand, unseen,
Has paid his hard inexorable lord.
The bankrupt tradesman, by a seeming magic,
Opens again his merchandize to view.
I become useless, and have no employment.

Louisa. Not my deserts, but your loved Frederick's choice,
Shows me thus worthy in your eyes. That preference,
That would make vain all womankind, swells out
My dwarfish merits, till they take a form
Of magnified importance. Propp'd by the arm
Of this affection, I feel less presuming
To stand before such holiness,

Abbot. My children,
The happiness this day presents is fleeting ;
No sooner tasted, than snatch'd quick away !
I must resign you—Dangers, I am told,
Lie thick in ambush here—you must depart
(Hastening your nuptials) to some distant safety.

Fred. Slow is the march of conscious innocence :
It flings not back its head to trace the cause
Of such imagined dangers ; nor hastes on,
With coward eagerness, though real mischief
Should clatter at its heels. This was your
lesson.—

Why should we fly ! Who is the wise adviser ?

Abbot. You saw who just now left me—the
Lord Henry.

Fred. Here, I detect the Countess' artful hand :
He is a mill, that turns but to the air
She gives to his obsequious sails. Indeed,
It may suit well the scheming of such souls,
That all observance of their twisted conduct,
With us should be removed. Good father Abbot,
Let us retire within, and weigh with care
The importance of this counsel ; there, to measure
The portion of obedience that should follow.

[*Exeunt.*

THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT IV.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Louisa and Isabella.

Louisa. [*reading a letter.*] Detested paper!—

Learn its foul contents—

As it has mine, let horror seize thy soul !

O better had my clay been cast in the mould

Of worst deformity—better had sickness

Mark'd me, at life's first dawn, the palest child

Of all her ghastly family, than to fire

Thus, in the impious breast of Casimir,

The torch of fatal passion !

Isa. Though my tongue

Refused to utter the oppressive fear,

I saw too much, and dreaded every hour

The explosion of the mine.

Louisa. Read, I beseech thee,

To what he dares invite me—To nought less

Than to a base, adult'rous flight with him !

For, am I not his son's betrothed wife ?

Observe the cruel menaces that follow

Here let me pour my tears in Pity's bosom,
For thine is ever such to me !—O gentlest,
Of friends the best, counsel thy poor Louisa !

Isa. Chiefly from Frederick, in the earth's deep
centre,

Bury the awful secret. Well thou know'st
His humour. O he'll madden at the tale !—
Advise with the good Abbot. Let discretion—

Louisa. At crimes like these, at such atrocities,
Will patient Nature cautiously assume
A mien of tutor'd prudence—hush her voice
In her own heaving bosom—give her tears,
Lest they be noticed, to the rushing torrent—
And seize upon no hour for lamentation,
For righteous sorrow, and for just complainings—
Save when in roaring winds all sounds are buried?
Insulted thus, thus outraged, must she pace
In cold discretion's circle, nor start up,
Like an avenging power, to plead her cause
Before a fair, a sympathising world,
Marshalling millions on her side? Can I,
Not train'd in falsehood's arts, first practise them
On him, who is the image of all truth?

Isa. Yet, on my knees, I ask thee to suspend

The horrible disclosure, till removed
Far from these scenes of guilt, lest Frederick fall
A victim to his justified resentment.

Think on a father's power, and weigh the rage
That then may plunge in blood that human tiger !
Thy innocent hands may themselves forge the
fettters

Of Frederick's bondage. He may be hid for ever,
The lingering ghastly tenant of a cell.

Nay, while, with fruitless tears, thou art bewail-
ing

His sad captivity, he may long since
Have found a grave beneath his prison pavement.

Louisa. Such thoughts have render'd this
strange task of secresy

So strong a duty, that all other things
Are borne away before it. As I value
My Frederick's precious life, our general wel-
fare,

No force, I swear, shall wrest this horror from
me.

I am prepared to meet the worst of torments,
The rack of Frederick's questions

Isa. Lo ! my friend,

He bends his steps this way. Hide from his view
These lines with mischief teeming; and remember
What rests upon the honest artifice——

[*Exit Isabella.*

Enter Frederick.

Fred. To find thee thus unchanged in every
thing,
Save in augmented charms, repays the pangs,
All the sad hours of absence. Why look back
On the long dreary vale, nor raise our view
Up to the sunny prospect now before us?
But sure I err, or tears, with caustic dew,
Have on those eye-lids left a coral stain.
Just as I enter'd, you perused a letter.

Louisa. I did peruse a paper.

Fred. O! a scroll
Of slight importance!—yet, if in that bosom
It has insinuated affliction's venom,
Can I, without impeachment of my love,
Deem it of trifling import? Perhaps, Louisa,
Some other cause, and not that paper, damps
All the light joys that, when we met this morning,

Sat on thy open brow—and yet that paper
You seem'd to hide as I approach'd.

Louisa. Yes, Frederick !

That letter *was* the cause—Thus far I own.
Press me no further now. Trust me, hereafter
All—all shall be reveal'd.

Fred. And why not now ?

Oh ! if you knew the brood of ugly spirits
That, while you speak, are warming into life,
Are gaining strength to poison all our bliss ;
Rather than view me crazed, you'd crush them
all,

Ere they were busy at their dreadful work

Louisa. I conjure you, spare me——

Fred. Oh, Louisa !

Time was, when the electric spark of joy
Or sorrow, at the same instant, visited
The inmost cell of both our hearts, and touch'd
Each quiv'ring fibre with the same vibration.
We seem'd but one—one soul to animate
Our separate frames ; so that all confidence
Between us became needless. Do I live
To say those hours are past and gone ? Alas !
The dreadful change ! It rests with you to tell,

What niche in all this strange, much-alter'd
building,

I am to fill——

Louisa. *That* of the proudest place ;
That, where the incense of the tenderest love
Shall ever smoke ; *that*, where the lamp of truth
Shall shed its holiest light—for that shall be
Thy proper station. There shall be laid open
Thy poor Louisa's breast—each separate leaf
Of that pure volume willingly expanding
To thy severest search,—Believe me, Frederick,
No blot will there be found—no, not a speck
On its transparent surface. Hear, Ungrateful,
'Tis for thy sake, thy safety, I am silent.

Fred. For me, you may relax these anxious
fears :

I can command my temper, though I meet
The man, who suns in the more genial warmth
Of your affections.—Nay, perchance those fears
Are not confined to me——But be at rest :
A soldier's sword will hardly try its edge
To spoil the features of the favour'd youth
Who may be found my rival.

Louisa. Oh, unjust !

How much you will repent, perhaps too late,
Thus sowing noxious plants, and cankering
thorns,

Where, at your will, the sweetest flowers might
bloom !—

I tell thee, Frederick, that thou'lt die with shame :
Ages of kindness, gentleness, and love,
Thou'lt think too short to atone for this harsh
usage.

Have I—have I deserved such base suspicions ?

[*weeps.*

Fred. Though I've an Ætna here, that stream-
ing shower

Quenches its boiling fury. Dry those tears ;
Those drops are large—each has sufficient power
To wash away poor, weak, resistless manhood.
Oh, my Louisa ! e'en jealousy itself
Has lost its massive weight, and, like a straw,
Rides buoyant on the bosom of that stream.

Louisa. Then is my Frederick again himself
Kind, just, and generous.—Behold this arm,
'Tis not Herculean, yet shall find the strength
To hold the pond'rous rudder of his safety.

[*Exit Louisa.*

Fred. [*solus.*] What can this mean ! I could not see her weep.

How, while I gazed on her, did I forget
That vulture at my heart, the guilty hiding
Of that cursed letter—Oh ! she hid it from me,
Or I had found the spring, and master-key
Of all these mysteries.—Shame on my dotage,
Thus to have swoln the rank list of those,
Who, down to me, from first created man,
Have drawn the scorn of ev'ry age upon them,
Gull'd by a few salt tears, and silly prayers !

Enter Adolphus.

Adolph. My friend, well found ! I eagerly have sought you.

You've seen our good Lord Abbot ?

Fred. Not long since,
Has he departed hence——

Adolph. Then, prithee, tell me,
Has he not strongly urged your quick departure ?

Fred. He has——

Adolph. No longer you resist his counsels ?

Fred. Why not resist them?—he assign'd no motive.

Besides, Lord Henry was his oracle.

Perhaps, with you he has been more explicit :

Bless'd in his confidence, you, perhaps, make one
Of that grave parliament, which has pronounced
The sentence of my banishment.

Adolph. Thy happiness,
Nay, life itself, depends on thy obedience.

Fred. So, so—I'm glad to find my friend
Adolphus

Thus well instructed.—Now, let's learn the cause.

Adolph. I know it not——

Fred. What ! ignorant, and yet
So eager for this flight ! a step not quite
Indifferent—to shun a father's presence—
To forfeit all fair title to the canopy
Of this paternal roof, and use the wings
That those would use who do some shameful act ;
And when I'm ask'd, what dangers I am shun-
ning,

To say, another told me there was peril—

You are not wont to trifle with your friend ?

Adolph. This instant I have left my Isabella ;

And, had you witness'd her distracted soul,
With fears for you, and for Louisa, you'd deem'd
No trivial cause had work'd the deep distress.

Fred. Then, here's another added to the roll
Of tame and credulous good souls, who, if
Made but for little use, still are the stuff
From which the best of husbands are cut out.—

[*Aside.*

Adolphus, thou hast known me from my youth ;
What hast thou seen in me, to make thee think,
That, happily not yet deprived of vision,
I should commit my footsteps to the care
Of some sagacious dog to lead me safe,
Rather than trust my own observances ?
Or, hearing with the sense of common men,
I should, for the perception of all sound,
Depend upon my neighbour's organs ?—For,
What is it you propose, but that I seal
A resignation of my faculties,
And put my mind and limbs in tutelage,
Following as others beckon ?

Adolph. Now pray Heaven,
The apprehensions of thy friends prove ground-
less !

Foreboding thoughts, which I would only own
To thee, because thou know'st I'm not a coward,
Haunt me where'er I turn. The air I draw
Sits a perpetual night-mare on my breast.
I hate the place, and stop, with shameful pause,
Whene'er I lift the arras of the doors,
Lest one should there be hid with murd'rous pur-
pose.

Till now, I never entertain'd such fancies.

Fred. Peres will tell thee, that thy body's sick;
He'll exorcise these demons with a drug.

And now adieu—Let Peres quick be sent for :

Adolphus is not well. *[Exit Adolphus.*

*[As Frederick is going out at the opposite
door, he meets the Fatal Sister.*

Sist. Stop, stop, Lord Frederick—
Wherefore this haste ?

Fred. The question, and the arrest,
Bespeak a right, a stranger, as thou art
To me, may find not easy to maintain.
I would pass on——

Sist. I'll charm thee with a word,
And fix thee, like a statue, to this place.
Know, thy admonish'd flight is ignominy :

Thou'rt much abused—Trust not the treach'rous
shell,

But pierce into the kernel, where thou'lt find
An eating maggot, preying on the food
That ought to be thy nourishment of life.

Fred. What can'st thou be, that seem'st to
know so much,
And yet, like all the rest, add'st to the fever
Of my distracted brain?

Sist. Inquire no further.
The hour's not yet arrived for explanation.
Follow me not ; we soon may meet again.
Pursue me not a step—Th' attempt to gain
The knowledge of the place I here may occupy,
Will blast my power hereafter to assist thee.

[*Exit Sister.*

Fred. Amazement chills my soul !—Why am
I thus

The sport of all, strangers as well as others ?
I will be fool'd no longer—this mystery
Must from its hiding place, be pluck'd by force,
For it has yielded to no soft persuasion.
'Tis true, I'm much abused. I'll to the Countess :
As all fair dealing has deserted those

Who formerly abhorr'd dark, crooked ways,
Perhaps, for change, it takes up its abode
With our dear Step-mother.—They'll drive me
mad !

S C E N E II.

The Countess's Apartment.

Countess. [*alone.*] Now, by my wrongs, since
squeamish Henry's arm
Is ague-struck and palsied ; trembling shrinks
From wonted enterprize and noble daring ;
Be it for me, to show I can dispense
With such white-liver'd agents.—This dark
juice, [*showing a phial.*
These deadly drops, in failure of the projects
That now are swarming in the steaming hive
Of my conceiving brain, must be my last,
Infallible resource.—But try we first,
Whether, possess'd of these important secrets,
We may not, by contrivance and safe means,
Tempt him, without my aid, to seek the cave,
The silent cave, of everlasting sleep.

Enter Louisa.

Louisa. I am inform'd, that I am summon'd
here.

Countess. 'Tis true, Louisa, I would speak
with thee.—

See! [*aside.*] how she stands before me, pure and
innocent,

Unconscious of the ills that hover o'er her,
As, at its play, the thoughtless infant. Would
That this poor lamb were driven far aside,
And set apart from slaughter—from the ruin
That must indeed spread wide t' ensure my safety.

Louisa. I wait thy pleasure.—Sure she hears
me not.

Countess. [*aside.*] Ye powers! how comes it,
that such gentleness
Holds o'er the world a more commanding sceptre
Than I can hope to grasp, although install'd
By hell itself in worldly power.—There's something
In the free-rolling eye of virtue, that
Arrests the furtive glance of guilt, and chains it
To the ground—I hardly dare look up to her—

Louisa. Alas ! what means this humour !—

Ne'er before

I view'd her thus.

Countess. Excuse me, dear Louisa,

I was absorb'd in thought—a heavy grief

Makes me thus absent, and distracts my mind.

My sorrow is for thee.

Louisa. For me ! what cause,

I do entreat thee, raises this emotion ?

Countess. Go ! thou'rt a poor dissembler.—

This sad morning,

That should have danced upon its feet of down,

Hailing the hymeneal torch that leads it ;

That from those chambers should have stol'n the
gloom,

And made a pause, a sort of holiday,

In this most dismal sameness ; lour'd and frown'd

When most it should have smiled.—Come, come,

I know

What strings are at thy heart.—Start not, but listen.

Louisa. And how have I betray'd a mind
disturb'd !—

Countess. I'll save thee all the pain of a con-
fession—

I am no stranger to my husband's passion :
Long used to his hard treatment, in the range
He gives to his unbridled lusts, I grieve
That his incestuous eyes are fix'd on thee.

Louisa. O horror ! O disgust !

Countess. I echo back
Those sounds : thy virtuous hate, and natural
loathing,
Secure in me a friend.—My care shall be
To shelter thy sad head from this foul storm,
From all the rage of disappointed passion ;
Though I should be the victim of its fury.

Louisa. What can I say ?—How thank thee?—

By what words
Express my grateful feeling ?

[*kneels to the Countess.*

Countess. Rise, Louisa ;
I am o'erpaid.—The mode by which we may
Elude the present danger, has not ta'en
Its perfect shape.—Thou know'st the shaded walk
That leads to the pavilion ; in an hour
Thou'lt find me there ; there will we plan together
Thine and thy dearest Frederick's preservation.
Till then, resume thy wonted cheerfulness ;

And mark my words, dear child, all shall be well.
Be punctual to the time.—No thanks—farewell.

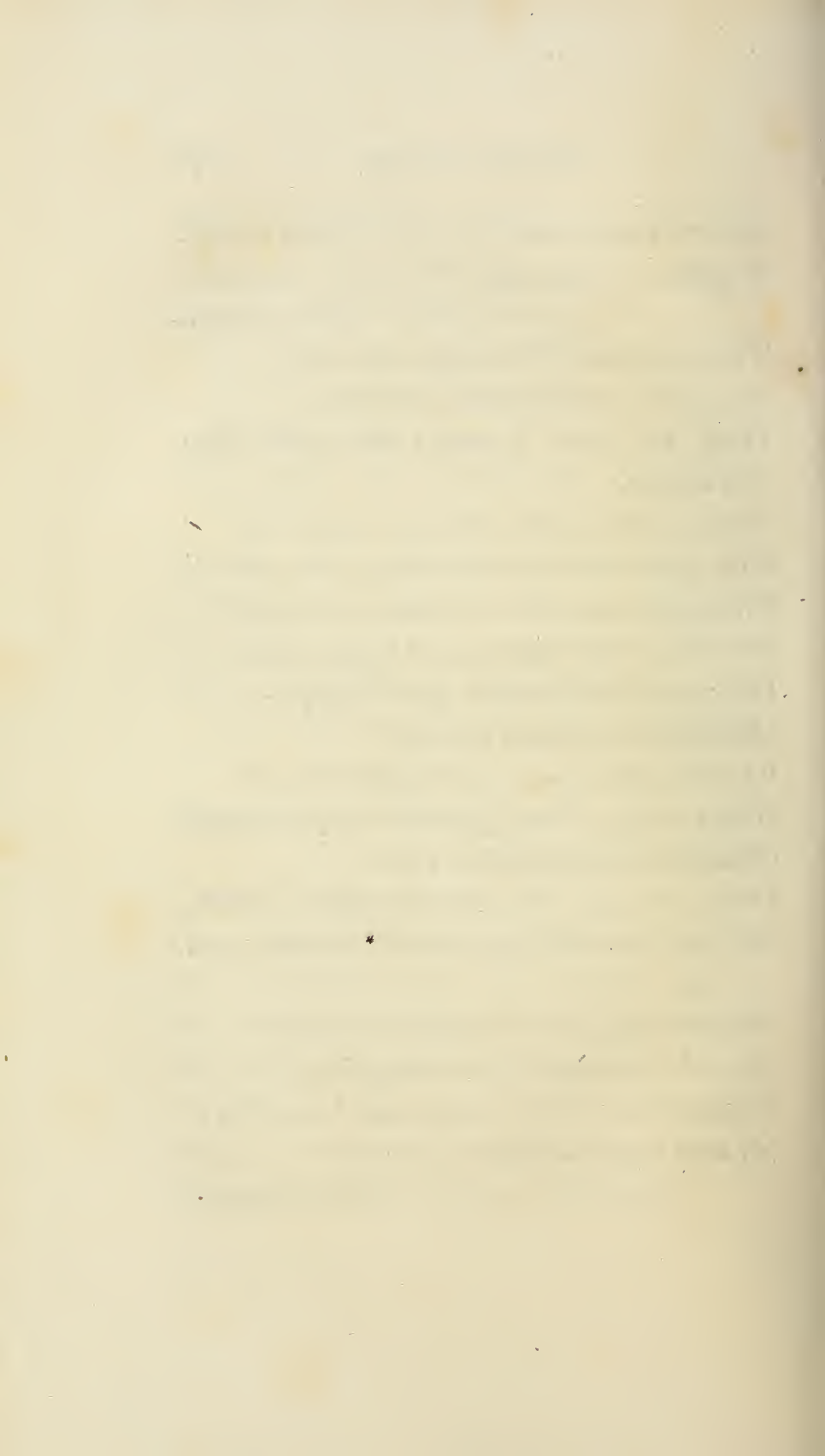
[*Exit Louisa.*

If thou art punctual to the time, so shall
Another be ; not I, but thy new lover.
There, too, must Frederick be found.—Most
strange,

If such a meeting end not to our wish !
First, how to draw Lord Casimir to the spot—
Giving him hope, will lead him to the snare ;
For will not driv'ling age send out its sparks
Like youth itself, if struck upon by hope—
Making itself a pointed mockery !
By what slight causes, are the great events
Of this strange planet govern'd !—By four lines
Of artful imitation, must this hand
Form a dire spell, that, from the realms of death,
Shall call the murd'rous fiends t^h assemble near
me !

Then give me, sacred Vengeance, to assume
The noble semblance of the ruling fury,
To teach them where to strike, and how to lay
My hard oppressor lifeless at my feet !

[*Exit Countess.*



THE
STEP-MOTHER.

ACT V.

ACT V. SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT OF THE CASTLE.

Countess and Frederick.

Countess. Frederick, I hail, with a fond
mother's joy,
Your glad return, which promises a change,
A softening of condition, to the wretched
Whom these sad walls imprison.

Fred. Has there, then,
During our absence, been no change worth notice?
Have all things, then, obey'd their former laws,
And in the same mark'd circles roll'd? No loops
Of deviation? What, no lively flights,
Merely to vary the old tedious paths,
And make the blood flow quicker? As Constancy
Seems to have quarrell'd with its old ally,
Pure Love, and their ill-sorted league's dissolved;
No wonder, then, that she has turn'd to dulness,
And here they reign together——

Countess. Ah!—Those words
Should be explain'd! something, I see, has
touch'd

A chord, that must be struck on to th' utterance
Of a much louder sound.— [Aside.

What change, I pray you,
Was to be look'd for here?—Time has not added
Wings to his limping gait. The sullen bell
Swings out its mandates, both for prayer and
food,

As it has done for ages.—All the night,
The same intemperate orgies tear the hall,
And, to my grief, menace your honour'd father
With premature abridgment of his days.

Fred. But, for your wards—have they sat
moping too,
Weeping their absent mates? No mirth to cheer
them?

No company of youth, as does befit them?—
'Tis well we are return'd!

Countess. You know, Louisa
In kindred is as rich as in possessions.
Such visit at their will—some strangers, too,
Young officers of the adjoining garrison,

Would, in their pity, sometime come, to checquer
Our heavy hours with partial rays of gaiety.

Fred. Do I know any of these visitors?

Countess. The greater number—and, among
the many,

The young Prince Stanislaus.

Fred. What, he who did
Such able service at the siege of Bender,
In the last year's campaign?

Countess. The same.

Fred. In form,
And in accomplishments, we might search far,
Before we found his equal.—Came he often?
Oftener, perhaps, than others!

Countess. Oh! 'tis there,
The pois'nous seed lies hid!—It shall be ripen'd—
Now, I begin to tread a smoother road.—

[*Aside.*

Under this roof, all found a constant welcome;
Our living more adapted to the ways
Of some than others.

Fred. And this beauty man!—
I mean him no disparagement—I know
Him brave, and courteous, highly skill'd in arms.

From liveliness of temper, wit, and frolic,
He must have suited Isabella's fancy.
Adolphus dreams not of his near escape ;
For that young soldier has a witching tongue.

Countess. This might have been his former
disposition ;

But, for *her* wildness, he was much too sad.
He seem'd to affect a melancholy air,
Books of a serious turn, grave reasonings ;
Scattering before our little tender fawns
Such food of science, as, when I was young,
I had not stoop'd to browse on.

Fred. Both, I ween,

Were the attentive pupils of this sage ?

Countess. I say not so of Isabella——

Fred. Torture !—

And did these lectures frequently prevail,
You, Madam, always present ?

Countess. Could that be ?

Could I pursue them o'er the mountain's ridge,
To seek for some rare fossil ? or could I
Pass evenings in the forest, to detect
Some plant of curious growth.—But you seem
moved :

You surely don't suspect Louisa's truth ?
Living for you, what matters it with whom,
Or where, she ran ?—Have you not, long since,
gain'd

The empire of her heart ? I'm confident,
You've yet no ground for jealousy. Causeless
Suspicion will call up, in woman's breast,
A hate too exquisite for man's conception.—
I do entreat thee, if thou find'st that canker
Has, with its sharp, corroding tooth, begun
To prey upon thy heart, quickly tear out
The morbid portion, and, O ! cast it from thee.
Rather, call down from th' air the famish'd
kites,

And bid them battle for the carrion banquet,
Than suffer it to rot within thy bosom.

Fred. O rack me not with doubts !—Those
words you utter'd

Have, from the viper's gum, pluck'd out its bag,
And squeez'd it on my brain.

Countess. Yet still be patient.

Indeed, I think Louisa may be true.

Some things I have not lik'd—but, these were
trifles.

I found them both in tears. But, tears might flow
From a sad tale, read in some doleful volume.

Fred. O no !—I see it all—all is discover'd,
Clear as the light. My friends suspect her failings,
But dare not think she is thus plunged in guilt ;
So tempt me to bear off the glorious prize,
Ere one should come, with a superior claim,
And ravish it away.—The Innocent,
That has been scorch'd by an illicit fire,
E'en in its progress up the altar's steps !
Who, when she yields her to the nuptial-bed,
In her rank mind, is by another clasp'd ;
And who, perhaps, hastens herself these rites,
To hide the babe, now moving in her womb,
In a wife's holy mantle.

Countess. I may err :—
But from the love I bear thee, and, what's more,
From stronger ties of duty to thy father,
Could I, with patience, view the son deceived ?
Would'st thou be satisfied ?

Fred. Be satisfied !—
I would, indeed, nay, must be satisfied.

Countess. Then be attentive, and observe this
mode—

If they hold meetings, this must be the practice.
Thou know'st the walk that leads to the pavilion :
I've marvell'd wherefore, at a certain hour,
In spite of drizzling rains, and boist'rous winds,
Louisa ever does frequent that spot.

The hour's at hand ; and I would pledge my life,
That, thou wilt there, at least, exchange suspense
For certainty.—Thou wilt not go unarm'd.

O promise me, thou wilt not go unarm'd ;—
Whate'er thou may'st conceive of that young
soldier's

Virtue, and bright honour, a rival's sword,
At such intrusion, would not long repose
Within a peaceful scabbard.—Now, farewell.

*[Exit Countess. Frederick flings himself
into a chair, in extreme agitation.]*

Enter Abbot.

Abbot. Good heavens, what means this agony
of soul !

Speak to me, Frederick ; I may have the power
To exorcise the demons, who, by spells,
And dark contrivances, in hell engender'd,
Have cast down all our edifice of joy.

I'm come to take my leave—for still your friends
Insist upon your flight with your Louisa.

Fred. I heard you but imperfectly—*my*
Louisa !—

What's mine to-day, to-morrow is another's ;
And, by the quicker shifting of the coin
From palm to palm, the learned writers say,
The state becomes more flourishing. Something
Was said of flight. *I* have much business here—

Abbot. This talk is naught.—Those friends,
whom you despise,
All dread some coming ill ; their cares, their
kindness——

Fred. There is a most strange cozenage in such
kindness ;
I'm tired of their emollient cares. We've heard,
That, unctuous liquor, on the ocean cast,
Will still the waves that curl their heads to
heaven :

But, should a slabbering ideot pour the same
Upon a raging fire, you'd grant, good father,
That were a mighty error. Know, the oil,
Which these officious friends so kindly bring,
They sprinkle on a furnace. Feel this pulse ;

Does it not beat as it would wake the dead ?
And yet I am not sick, unless the quackery
Of those, who say they love me, make me so.

Abbot. These are the first harsh words I ever
heard

Disgrace those gentle lips.

Fred. Harsh words to you !

You surely must mistake. What have I said ?
Next to the God, whose essence I adore,
And to whose judging bar, quick as the march
Of morning light, I, wretch, may be convey'd ;
Next to the worship at his sacred altars ;—
Oh ! I have ever deem'd it not impiety
Thus, thus to kneel to thee.

Abbot. Arise, my son.

How can I soothe the tempest of thy mind ?

Fred. If we e'er meet again——

Abbot. If meet again !

Fred. I know I shall not sink in thy esteem ;
And, if condemn'd a fugitive to roam
Far, far from hence, O judge me not with rigour !
For, I have crying wrongs—Of these no more.—
Or, should I be embraced by death's cold hand,
And if there be an interposing space

Shunn'd me, in crossing the adjoining hall.

Does he retain his obstinate intent

Of braving here the dangers that are menaced?

Abbot. The last night's tempest was a zephyrous gale,

To the rough storm that tears his frame to atoms :

Rage in his glowing eyes, and on his lips

A babel of strange words, which always rung

Of insults, wrongs, and griefs.—Then, at the sounding

Of the sixth hour, he sprang from me away ;

But temper'd, suddenly, his last adieu,

With such sweet milk of kindness, as unmans me, [weeps.

Yet nourishes the hope, that the proud structure
Of his exalted mind is not for ever

Ruin'd.—Adolphus, quick pursue your friend ;

He ill will brook observance—but be near,

To shield his unprotected head from danger ;

But most, too horrid thought ! prevent an act

Of fatal rage !—O guard him from himself !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Count Casimir, Lord Henry.

Cas. [*with a letter.*] Peruse this scroll.—

How like you the contents?—

Hen. Amazement chills my heart. It cannot
be,

Though like Louisa's hand. I've seen twin
infants,

Asunder, almost cheat the parent's eye;

But, when together, show, with glaring marks,

How much they differ.—Nay, a single word,

Traced by her pen, would prove the counterfeit.

Cas. You seem incredulous.

Hen. In truth, I am so;

To find such innocence, and modesty,

Melt, on a sudden, like a shrinking snow

Upon a southern bank, and turn her cheek,

With the lewd sun-flower, to the first hot ray

That rushes forth to meet it.

Cas. The miracle,

To view a woman won by flattery !
What think you of the proffer'd assignation ?
Is not the place of meeting named ? the spot
A private one ?—Say, do I dream all this ?

Hen. Regard it still a trick of some sworn foe,
Some foul assassin's scheme.—You have escaped
More than one murd'rous project 'gainst your life.
O be upon your guard !

Cas. Your friendly prudence
Might much avail with those you're used to herd
with,
Important seigniors of an anti-chamber,
Whose souls of enterprize have ne'er been found,
But in the glorious contest for a door-way,
Whose shoulder should be first advanced.—Talk
not
To me——

Hen. Can you believe, the young Louisa
Turns from your son to you ?

Cas. I caution you
To silence—I'm not used to be thus tutor'd.

Hen. Must I, then, see you rush on certain
ruin,
And not endeavour to impede your course ?

Cas. Impede my course ! Move but a limb,
that motion

Will cost thee dear.—Endeavour to prevent
My fix'd designs, or but divulge the secret,
With which thou art entrusted, and, by Heaven,
Some dungeon-door shall close on thee for ever !
Centuries shall pass away, before th' exposure
Of thy uncoffin'd bones shall mark the hole
Where, and in what twisted form of agony
Thou yielded'st to thy fate.—Remember, Sir,
That I am master here. [*Exit Casimir.*

Hen. What's life to me ?

Vain are such threats !—The hell I suffer now,
Defies hereafter all increase of torment.
If I provoke my end, let my last act,
O God !—my first !—be such, as pitying angels
May dare to look on. Haste we, then, to snatch
This virtuous, injured pair, from their destruction ;
Expose this sensual tyrant's black intent,
And quickly circumvent a subtler fiend,
Whose cursed foot-steps I begin to follow
In this mysterious sand. [*Exit Henry.*

SCENE III.

A WALK IN A GROVE.

Louisa.

The evening's cold and dreary : the dull clouds
Cling to the mountain's side. The baffled sun
Calls in his beams, and hies him to the west ;
No longer struggling with the thick'ning vapour.
How many of this world must never view
His rise again !—Alas ! methinks, these oaks
Spread a sepulchral shade—I never liked
The spot. The silly servants of the castle
Ever avoid it ; for they say, they walk
On drops of blood, which neither snows nor
rains
Can e'er efface.—Indeed, 'tis strange the Countess
Could find no private chamber in that edifice .
More fit for conference ! But I've obey'd——

Enter Casimir, wearing his cloak as a disguise.

Louisa. Eternal powers ! What's this ?—A man disguised !

[Casimir discovering himself.]

Lord Casimir !—Quick, tell me, where's the Countess ?

Cas. 'Tis not her custom, thus to risk her health,
Amidst such rising dews. You could not hope
To meet her here.

Louisa. Whom came I here to meet ?

Cas. One, in whose bosom those transcendant charms

Have lit a torch of everlasting love ;
Who, in the lowest cavern of despair,
Found in that darkness, by thy lovely aid,
How to bind on the crimson wings of hope.

Louisa. My Lord, I comprehend you not—
My aid !

Cas. *[showing a letter.]* Does not the extatic
bliss, herein contain'd,
Spring from thy magic touch ?—This letter wills
That I attend you here. By this inform'd,
I come not to be chid for owning, that

I love, how long, how truly, I've adored ;
Rather to watch compassion's milky stream
Burst from its source, and hear that angel voice
Confirm the pardon of the rash avowal.
For what can we demand of saints in heaven,
But first to listen, then bestow their pity?

Louisa. If I have listen'd, without calling down
The execration of the world upon thee ;
If I have listen'd, and not fiercely roused,
In my just cause, the rage of all my kindred ;
And, if I've been thus patient, 'midst my
wrongs ;—

Know, 'twas for Frederick's sake, I wore the mask
Of honest simulation ; boldly risk'd
All that I now endure, sooner than drive
Him crazed about the earth, and hold the knife,
That cuts, at once, all bands of filial piety,
Which, sever'd thus, no art can ever knit
Again in union.

Cas. Have I not clear proof,
Most damning proof, of a much softer temper,
Of gentler thoughts ?—You cannot, sure, deny
This writing——

Louisa. O, I do ! and swear, by Him

Who is all truth, that you are much abused.
Save then your son—yourself—from endless misery,
And suffer me to quit these scenes for ever !

[Offering to go, is prevented by Casimir.]

Cas. 'Tis like you all—from fancy, sport, caprice,
Pure love of change, mere curiosity,
There is no peril that ye will not face ;
Attempt the skies, or dive into th' abyss
Which fathom has not sounded ; ever trusting,
That falsehood will be ready at your call,
And free you from the jeopardy.—You have
Allow'd me hope ; what's more, have met me here :
The appointment yours. I'll not be trifled with,
Nor moved by your denial—not hell itself
Shall scare me from my purpose !

Louisa. Ah !—what purpose ?

Cas. You know the house in the forest—and
'tis there

That I expect, you will not long retain
This peevish mood, but soon again incline
To former gentleness.—The carriages
Are close at hand ; these will convey you quickly—

Louisa. What, to depart with you !—fly from
your son !

My life ! my husband !—If ever, when an infant
Clasp'd in thy arms, with his dear, cherub tongue,
He forced, into thy vanquish'd eyes, the dew,
The honied dew of tenderness ; if, since,
Thy pride, a father's honest pride, has swell'd
At his bright deeds ; thy renovated glory
Beaming anew beneath my Frederick's laurels ;
O spare him !—spare us both !

Cas. Nay, then, we must
Resort to force—resistance all is vain.

*[Endeavouring to draw her towards the
bottom of the stage.]*

Louisa. Sweet Heaven ! if innocence was ever
shielded—
Is no one near at hand ?

*Frederick enters, disguised in his cloak ; Casimir
immediately runs at him with his sword.*

Cas. Whoe'er thou art,
Take *this*, accursed intruder !—

*[Frederick draws to defend himself, and
Casimir instantly falls.—Louisa has sunk
on the ground with terror.]*

Fred. O Louisa !

Whate'er have been thy failings, can I bear
To see thee thus—then speak, and tell me quick,
What I have done. A valuable man,
Perhaps, has fallen by my hand ; one who,
By your approval of his love, may have
Excuse for this mad act. Is it young Stanislaus ?
I'm sorry for his fate ; and though my rival,
He merited a better.

Louisa. [after a long effort.] Oh ! no, no !

Fred. Who, then, could rush thus frantic on
my sword ?

Louisa. The miserable deed!—It was thy
father—

And there he lies, deprived of life by thee !

Fred. Merciful God !—then here I stand,
before thee,
A murd'rer, and a parricide !

Louisa. The fault
Was mine, was mine ! and all this woe has follow'd
From my erroneous silence.—But, my Frederick,
Thou, too, art bleeding !

Fred. True—at first, I thought
The hurt was slight—but I begin to feel,

It may be such as may remove from th' earth
A wretch, the foul destroyer of his father !
Look on that lifeless corse :—after that work,
That work of blood, could even *you*, Louisa,
Wish me to drag on life ?—

[*sinks with faintness.*

Louisa. O horror !—O despair !

*Enter Abbot, Isabella, Adolphus, Henry,
Servants.*

Abbot. Cries of distress,
And Frederick wounded !

Adolph. And the father slain !

Fred. That deed was mine !—If I had strength,
I'd show,

I am not quite so guilty as I seem.
Had I but known him, I'd not raised my arm
E'en in my own defence.—

[*sinks again, supported by Louisa and Isabella.*

Hen. [*picking up the letter which Casimir has
let fall.*] This may explain.

O here she reigns confess'd !—The sorceress—

How dext'rous was this subtle scheme of blood !
How, from her hateful entrails, has she spun
This glewy web !—What victim could elude her !
Then, though I stand a self-accused felon,
In sight of all men, she shall not escape,
If Poland has a law for crimes like these.
O Frederick !—O dear unhappy youth !
And could she find no other hand but thine,
To minister to such atrocious guilt ?—
But, here she comes.

Enter Countess.

Fred. The dark, infernal scheme,
Requires no comment—all is now unravell'd.
Pray, let her not approach me—and prevent her
From pois'ning the few moments I've to live,
By tempting me to curse her.—Those few moments
Should all be thine, Louisa.

Countess. O cruel sight !
What's here ?—our Fred'rick fallen !—my husband slain !
Ah me ! whose are these deeds ?

Hen. And dost thou ask?

Dost thou enquire who dyed this ground with
blood?

Know 'twas thyself—and Poland too shall know
The female wolf, that ravaged all this land.

I am prepared to hold up to its view,
A tissue of such crimes, as scarce have names
In the black chronicle of hell!

Countess. Thou art——

Hen. I am, inhuman woman!—though I see,
That we must fall together.

Countess. Abject slave!

Thou worst of villains! white-lip'd, dastard villain!
But still I'll triumph o'er thee—meet my fate,
With such a soul thou can'st not imitate.

Oh! it will soothe my dying hour, to watch
Thee, standing pale and trembling on the scaffold,
Shrink from the wheel, and howl before the torture.
Of this thou can'st not rob me.—Give me way.

[*rushes out.*]

Abbot. Pursue and guard her in the castle
towers,

Until a stronger prison shall receive her.

Louisa. You do not look so ghastly as you did—

Perhaps your pains are less. Shall we attempt
To bear you from this spot.

Fred. No, dear Louisa,
I'm past such care—that pang was terrible !
It was the gripe of death ; his icy fingers
Are busy at my heart.—Come near, good Abbot—
O comfort this poor mourner, and convince her,
I should have lived, the horror of the world—
'Tis better as it is.—Thy aid, Louisa,
A minute more, and I shall be at rest.
Farewell ! farewell !—

[*dies.*

Louisa. O agonizing words !—

Isa. Angels of mercy, he is gone for ever !

Abbot. A purer spirit never wing'd its flight
To heaven's bless'd mansions. How shall we
divide

The living from the dead ? Use gentle means—

Isa. Her hand is clench'd in his ; and, of the two,
Her's has the deadliest coldness—every sense
Seems failing. Ere the sad return of reason,
Let us entice her from this fatal spot.

[*Louisa appears recovering, and suffers
herself to be raised without speaking, but
looking wildly.*

Isa. This way, sweet friend.

Louisa. Ah ! that way leads, I know,
To Frederick's chamber—This glad morn, I fill'd it
With sweetest flowers—He'll guess who gather'd
them.

But have there not been combats, wounds, and
deaths ?

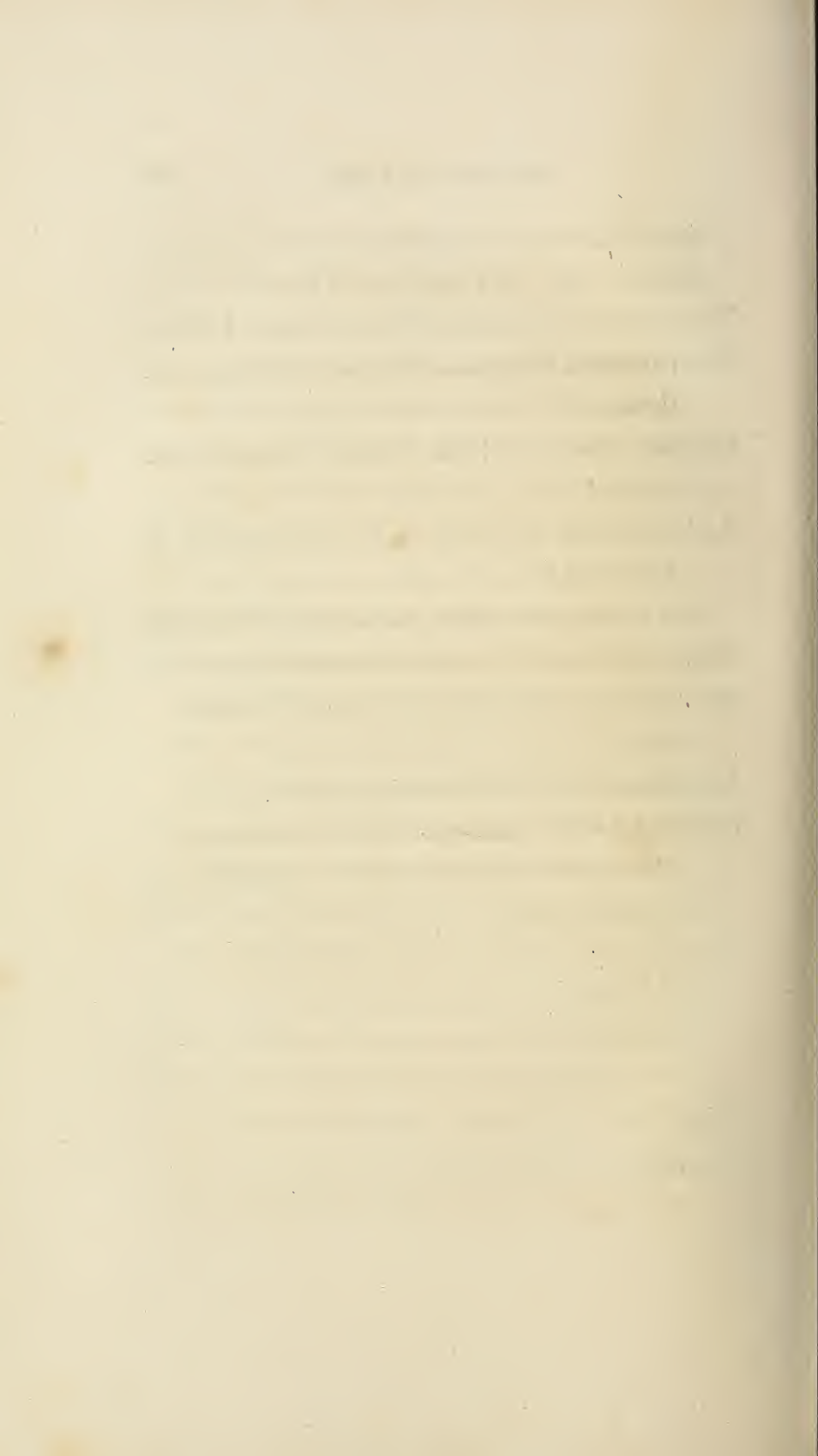
And yet you all seem well—Then, where is
Frederick ?—

[she breaks from them, and runs to Frederick.]

There, there he is ! I hold him in my arms !
He has been hurt, and you conceal'd it from
me ;

But presently he'll speak to me—indeed,
Indeed, he will ; and we shall both be happy.

*[Flings herself on Frederick's body, and the
Curtain falls.]*



EPILOGUE.

*BEFORE their trial at your awful bar,
Our saucy Bards appear to tread on air ;
Puff'd up with pride, and mad with distant fame,
No voice can stop them, and no counsel tame.
While in their breasts delicious fancies glow,
For them the earth's too small, the sky's too low ;
Visions of laurel crowns, before their sight,
Fleet in succession, till the fatal night ;
The fatal night, when all their courage flies,
And hope itself with the first music dies.
Soon, all the flimsy structure of their bliss
Shakes at a yawn, but's levell'd by a hiss.
At last, off! off! decides their final doom,
And, from the rack, conveys them to the tomb.
But yet, before they sink in endless night,
On our bad acting vent their furious spite ;
Swear we're the cause and authors of their shame,
Leagu'd with the envious town to blast their name.
Lost in amaze, perplex'd with dire dismay,
They know not how to fly, or how to stay.
Till, from the green-room, rushing to the street,
They kick the first poor link-boy that they meet.*

*So, from the City, starts some dashing spark,
Eyes his new chariot, and cries out, " Hyde Park !"*

EPILOGUE.

*From the small window pokes his Jewish nose,
And thinks he charms the public as he goes ;
Till some rude dray-man nips him in the bud,
And rolls the whisker'd coxcomb in the mud :
Who, cursing those that snatch him from the wreck,
Swears they're alike combined to break his neck.*

*Should you to-night our Poet but endure,
You'll fix his frenzy, and beyond all cure.
Lord ! how he'll vapour, and how domineer !
How little in his eyes shall we appear !
God knows but he'll attempt, in desperate rage,
To amend the taste, and fashion of the age,
And, grown quite wild, blaspheme the German stage !
Scout all the rules which teach us how to move,
To walk, to stand, to wear a hat, or glove !
How for each crime, that Nature stains, prepare
To draw from Pity's eye the holy tear !
How for the charming villain make you feel !
How to wear one shoe up, one down at heel !
Then bid us break these foreign chains, and dare
Fix for our elves a table or a chair !*

*This, you'll confess, is folly in the extreme ;
O do not then improve his dangerous dream ;
But, damning him, decree it be his fate,
Twelve plays, a-year, from Kotzebue to translate.*

P O E M S.



O D E

ON THE

DEATH OF GRAY.

1771.



ODE, &c.

I.

WHAT Spirit's that which mounts on high,
Borne on the arms of every tuneful Muse?
His white robes flutter to the gale:
They wing their way to yonder opening sky;
In glorious state, through yielding clouds
they sail,
And scents of heavenly flowers on earth diffuse.

II.

What avails the Poet's art?
What avails his magic hand?
Can He arrest Death's pointed dart,
Or charm to sleep his murderous band?
Well I know thee, gentle shade,
That tuneful voice, that eagle eye.—
Quick bring me flowers that ne'er shall fade,
The laurel wreath that ne'er shall die;
With every honour deck his funeral bier,
For He to every Grace, and every Muse was dear!

III.

The listening Dryad, with attention still,
On tiptoe oft would near the Poet steal,
To hear him sing, upon the lonely hill,
Of all the wonders of the expanded vale ;
The distant hamlet, and the winding stream,
The steeple shaded by the friendly yew,
Sunk in the wood the sun's departing gleam,
The gray-robed landscape stealing from the view.
Or, wrapt in solemn thought, and pleasing woe,*
O'er each low tomb he breathed his pious strain,
A lesson to the village swain,
And taught the tear of rustic grief to flow !——
But soon, with bolder note, and wilder flight,†
O'er the loud strings his rapid hand would run ;—
Mars hath lit his torch of war,
Ranks of heroes fill the sight !
Hark, the carnage is begun !
And see the Furies through the fiery air,
O'er Cambria's frighten'd land, the screams of
horror bear !

* Elegy written in a Country Church-yard.

† The Bard, a Pindaric Ode.

IV.

Now, led by playful Fancy's hand,*
O'er the white surge he treads with printless feet,
To magic shores he flies, and Fairy-land,
Imagination's bless'd retreat.

Here roses paint the crimson way,
No setting sun, eternal May,
Wild as the priestess of the Thracian fane,
When Bacchus leads the maddening train,
His bosom glowing with celestial fire,
To harmony he struck the golden lyre;
To harmony each hill and valley rung !
The bird of Jove, as when Apollo sung,
To melting bliss resign'd his furious soul :
With milder rage his eyes began to roll,
The heaving down his thrilling joys confess'd,
Till, by a mortal's hand subdued, he sunk to rest.

V.

O guardian angel of our early day,*
HENRY, thy darling plant must bloom no more !

* The Progress of Poetry, a Pindaric Ode.

† Ode on a distant Prospect of Eton College.

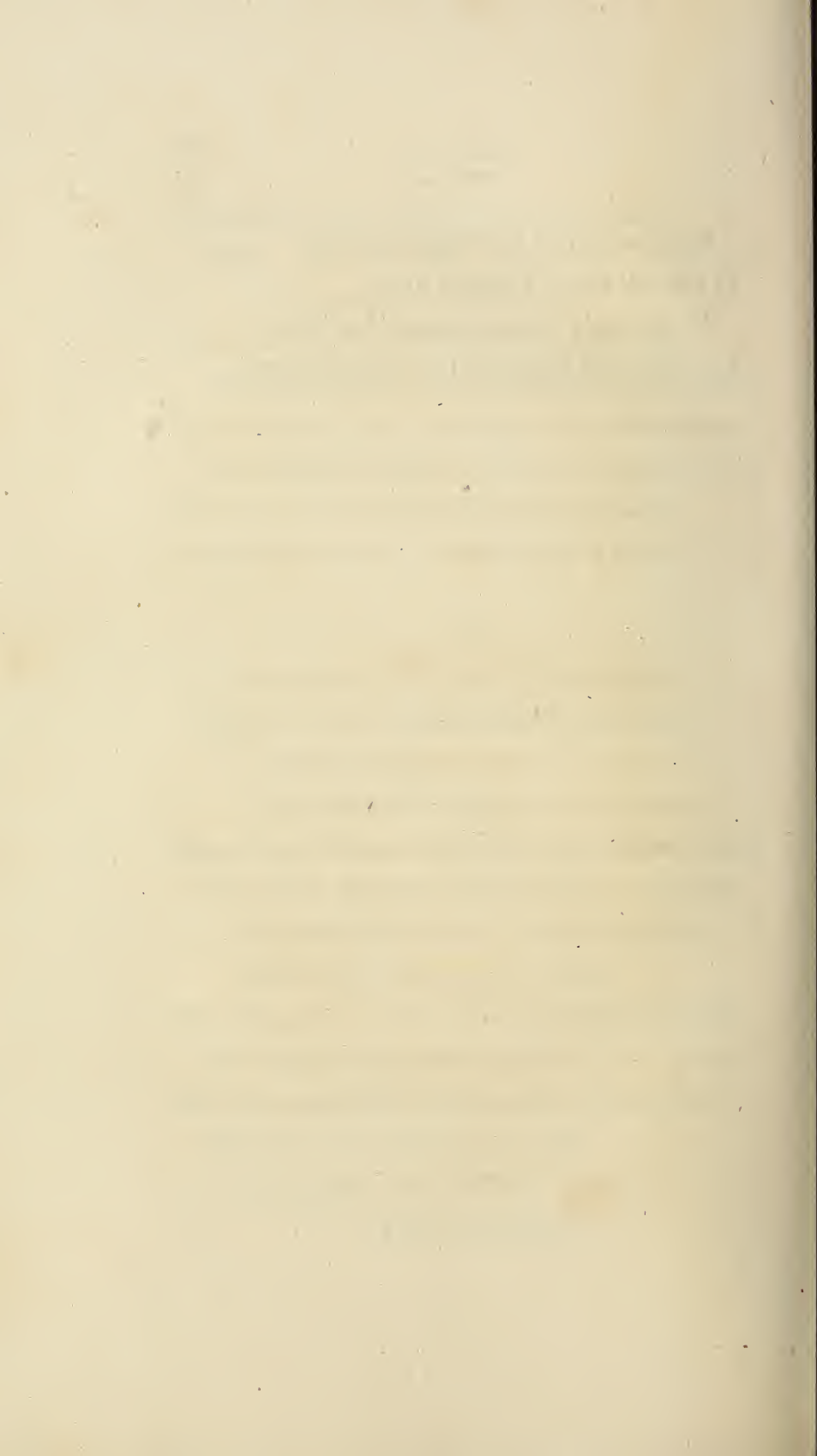
By thee attended, pensive would he stray,
Where Thames, soft murmuring, laves his
winding shore.
Thou bad'st him raise the moralizing song,
Through life's new seas the little bark to steer ;
The winds are rude and high, the sailor young,
Thoughtless he spies no furious tempest near ;
Till to the Poet's hand the helm you gave,
From hidden rocks an infant crew to save !

VI.

Ye fiends who rankle in the human heart,*
Delight in woe, and triumph in our tears,
Resume again
Your dreadful reign ;
Prepare the iron scourge, prepare the venom'd dart.
Adversity no more with lenient air appears ;
The snakes that twine around her head,
Again their frothy poison shed,
For who can now her whirlwind flight control,
Her threatening rage beguile ?
He, who could still the tempest of her soul,
And force her livid lips to smile,
To happier seats is fled !

* Hymn to Adversity.

Now, seated by his Thracian sire,
At the full feast of mighty Jove,
To heavenly themes attunes his lyre,
And fills with harmony the realms above !



TRANSLATION

FROM

D A N T E,

CANTO XXXIII.

DANTE, being conducted by VIRGIL into the infernal regions, sees a person devouring a human skull, and, struck by so horrid a sight, enquires into his history, and receives the account contained in the following lines.

1851

1851

1851

1851

1851

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1851

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1851

1851

TRANSLATION, &c.

Now from the fell repast, and horrid food,
The Sinner* rose ; but, first, (the clotted blood
With hair depending from the mangled head)
His jaws he wiped, and thus he wildly said—

Ah ! wilt thou then recall this scene of woe,
And teach my scalding tears again to flow ?
Thou know'st not how tremendous is the tale,
My brain will madden, and my utterance fail.

* Count Ugolino, a nobleman of Pisa, entered into a conspiracy with the Archbishop Ruggiero, of the Ubaldini family, to depose the governor of Pisa ; in which enterprise having succeeded, Ugolino assumed the government of the city ; but the Archbishop, jealous of his power, incited the people against him ; and, gaining the assistance of the three powerful families of the Gulandi, Lanfranchi, and Sismondi, marched, with the enraged multitude, to attack the house of the unfortunate Ugolino, and, making him their prisoner, confined him in a tower with his four sons : at length refusing them food, and casting the key into the river Arno, he left them, in this horrible situation, to be starved to death.

But could my words bring horror and despair
To him whose bloody skull you see me tear,
Then should the voice of vengeance never sleep,
For ever would I talk, and talking weep.

Mark'd for destruction, I, in luckless hour,
Drew my first breath on the Etruscan shore,
And Ugolino was the name I bore. }
This skull contain'd a haughty prelate's brain,
Cruel Ruggiero's ; why his blood I drain,
Why to my rage he's yielded here below,
Stranger, 'twill cost thee many a tear to know.
Thou know'st, perhaps, how, trusting to this slave,
I and my children found an early grave.
This thou may'st know, the dead alone can tell, }
The dead, the tenants of avenging hell,
How hard our fate, by what inhuman arts we fell. }
Through the small opening of the prison's height,
One moon had almost spent its waneing light ;
'Twas when short sleep had lull'd my pangs to
rest,
And wearied grief lay dozing in my breast ;
Futurity aside her curtain drew,
And thus, the troubled vision rose to view.

On those high hills, it seem'd, (those hills which
hide

Pisa from Lucca) that, by Sismond's side,
Guland and Lanfranc, with discordant cry,
Rouse from its den a wolf and young, who fly
Before their famish'd dogs ; I saw the sire
And little trembling young ones, pant and tire ;
Saw them become the eager blood-hounds' prey,
Who soon, with savage rage, their haunches flay.
I first awoke, and view'd my slumbering boys,
Poor hapless product of my nuptial joys,
Scared with *their* dreams, toss o'er their stony bed,
And, starting, scream, with frightful noise, for
bread.

Hard is thy heart, no tears those eyes can
know,

If they refuse, for pangs like mine, to flow.
My children wake ; for now the hour drew near,
When we were wont our scanty food to share.
A thousand fears our trembling bosoms fill,
Each, from his dream, foreboding some new ill.
With horrid jar, we heard the prison door
Close on us all, alas ! to ope no more.

My senses fail, absorb'd in dumb amaze,
Deprived of motion, on my boys I gaze :
Benumb'd with fear, and harden'd into stone,
I could not weep, nor heave one easing groan.
My children moan; my youngest, trembling,
cried,
“ What ails my father ?” still my tongue denied
To move ; they cling to me with wild affright :
That mournful day, and the succeeding night,
We all the dreadful horrid silence kept ;
Fearful to ask, with silent grief they wept.

Now, in the gloomy cell, a ray of light
New horrors added, by dispelling night ;
When, looking on my boys, in frantic fit
Of maddening grief, my senseless hands I bit.
Alas ! for hunger they mistake my rage,
“ Let us,” they cried, “ our father’s pains assuage :
“ ’Twas he, our sire, who call’d us into day, }
“ Clad with this painful flesh our mortal clay, }
“ That flesh he gave he sure may take away.”—— }

But why should I prolong the horrid tale ?—
Dismay and silent woe again prevail.

No more that day we spoke!—Why, in thy womb,
Then, cruel earth, did we not meet our doom?
Now, the fourth morning rose; my eldest child
Fell at his father's feet; in accent wild,
Struggling with pain, with his last fleeting breath,
“Help me, my sire,” he cried, and sunk in death.
I saw the others follow, one by one,
Heard their last scream, and their expiring groan.
And now arose the last concluding day;
As o'er each corse I groped my stumbling way,
I call'd my boys, though now they were no more,
Yet still I call'd, till, sinking on the floor,
Pale hunger did what grief essay'd in vain,—
For ever seal'd my eyes, and closed the scene of
pain.

TO A LADY,

WITH

A PRESENT OF FLOWERS

FROM

THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

12. 1. 1919

THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

TO A LADY.

FITTED to grace imperial Beauty's hand,
And, at thy bidding, shed our sweets around,
We come, wild children of a distant land,
Where monsters share, with wretched man, the
ground.

We've seen the buffalo rushing from the wood,
The march of elephants, the lion's war,
The sea-cow starting from the marshy flood,
Deep in the thicket shine the tiger's glare.

'Midst these soft groves though no hyæna lies,
No fell rhinoceros commands the plain,
Yet much we fear, though hidden from our eyes,
A fiercer monster holds his dreadful reign.
Wings on his back, and arm'd with poisonous
tongue,

Quick as our wolf, and cunning as the snake,
These scenes he's said to haunt : sweet lady, shun
At twilight hour, the valley and the brake :

In ambush here he lies ; his easiest prey

Young Health, and careless Beauty, as they
roam ;

Sweet lady, fly, gain thy protecting home ;
Safer on Afric's burning plains to stray,

Less mischiefs there obstruct the dangerous way.

TO

MRS. ISABELLA PITT.

It appears, by the pleadings relative to the will of Charles Mellish, Esq. (1786), that he had made this Lady the offer of succeeding to his estates, in prejudice of his natural heirs. To this offer she instantly returned this firm and dignified answer: "I hope there is nothing on earth could induce me to accept an estate that I certainly have no right to, and which my honour and conscience tell me belongs to others. Let me, therefore, prevail with you to make a fresh will immediately; for, I must acquaint you, were this you mention to take place, I should think myself bound, not only by every tie of justice and equity, but even to secure my own peace of mind, to resign every advantage I might receive by it, in favour of those who are much nearer related to you, and are really descendants of the Mellish family." Finding, however, at this gentleman's decease, that, contrary to her remonstrances, he had persisted in bequeathing his estates to her, she immediately resigned them to his niece, the person naturally entitled to the inheritance.

TO MRS. ISABELLA PITT.

A STRANGER Bard, turning from pomp and power,
Sits at the threshold of thy calm retreat ;
While, through the windings of thy peaceful
 bower,
Of harmless age,* and innocence the seat,

By the soft magic of a willing lute
 He leads the stream of harmony along,
Truth shall the subject to the measure suit,
 Honour and justice shall inspire the song.

Then shall thy conscious breast, thy generous
 heart,
From pride, from interest, each mean passion
 free,

* In her letter to Mr. Mellish, Mrs. Pitt, declining to become either his executrix or heiress, says, " My true character is that of a silly, ignorant, old woman (and being "*harmless*" is as much as can be said in my praise), and not at all fit to be employed in business."

When steady virtue claims the minstrel's art,
Challenge the note, and feel he sings to thee.

The gifted mansion, and the village cell,
Where rest the sick, the crippled, and the
poor,
Where Age, by Charity is led to dwell,
And wear out life, in sunshine, at the door;

How often raised to soothe the bed of care,
How often plann'd by malady's last breath,
To force a smile from horrible despair,
A cheat for terror, and a bribe for death!

Not such thy acts;—nor pains, nor fears, com-
bined
To bid thee turn the golden stream aside,
And, where immortal justice had design'd,
To its true channel lead the erring tide.

For virtues less than thine, had Athens raised
The letter'd column to thy spreading fame;
On Roman altars votive fires had blazed,
And mix'd with holy rites thy honour'd name.

If these, a niggard country should deny,
Something, O Pitt! the Muse has yet to give,
When the stone crumbles, and the flame shall
die,
Such worth as thine in lasting verse may live.

TO
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,
ON HIS
RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S CHAIR
OF THE
ROYAL ACADEMY.

MDCCXC.

THE JOURNAL OF THE

1861

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TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

Too wise for contest, and too meek for strife,
Like Lear, oppress'd by those you raised to life,
Thy sceptre broken, thy dominion o'er,
The curtain falls, and thou 'rt a king no more.
Still, near the wreck of thy demolish'd state,
Truth, and the weeping Muse, with me shall wait;
Science shall teach Britannia's self to moan,
And make, O injured Friend! thy wrongs her
own.

Shall we forget when, with incessant toil,
To Thee 'twas given to turn this stubborn soil;
To Thee, with flowers to deck our dreary waste,
And kill the poisonous weeds of vicious taste;
To pierce the gloom where England's genius slept,
Long of soft love and tenderness bereft;
From his young limbs to tear the bands away,
And bid the infant giant run and play?

Dark was the hour, the age an age of stone,
When Hudson claim'd an empire of his own;
And, from the time, when, darting rival light,
Vandyke and Rubens cheer'd our northern night,
Those twin stars set, the graces all had fled,
Yet paused to hover o'er a Lely's head;
And sometimes bent, when won with earnest
prayer,

To make the gentle Kneller all their care:
But ne'er with smiles to gaudy Verrio turn'd;
No happy incense on his altars burn'd.
O witness, Windsor, thy too passive walls,
Thy tortured ceilings, thy insulted halls!
Lo! England's glory, Edward's conquering son,
Cover'd with spoils from Poictiers bravely won;
Yet no white plumes, no arms of sable hue,
Mark the young hero to our ravish'd view;
In buskin trim, and laurell'd helmet bright,
A well-dress'd Roman meets our puzzled sight.
And Gallia's captive king, how strange his doom,
A Roman, too, perceives himself become!

See, too, the miracles of God profan'd,
By the mad daubings of this impious hand.

For, while the dumb exult in notes of praise,
While the lame walk, the blind in transport
 gaze,
While vanquish'd demons Heaven's high man-
 dates hear,
And the pale dead spring from the silent bier;
With laced cravat, long wig, and careless mien,
The painter's present at the wondrous scene!

Vanloo and Dahl, these may more justly claim
A step still higher on the throne of fame;
Yet to the west their course they seem to run,
The last red streaks of a declining sun.

And must we Jervas name? so hard and cold,
In ermined robes, and perukes, only bold;
Or, when inspired, his rapturous colours own,
The roll'd-up stocking, and the damask gown,
Behold a tasteless age in wonder stand,
And hail him the Apelles of the land!
And Denner too;—but yet so void of ease,
His figures tell you they're forbid to please;
Nor in proportion, nor expression nice,
The strong resemblance is itself a vice.

As wax-work figures always shock the sight,
Too near to human flesh and shape, affright,
And when they best are form'd afford the least
delight. }

Turn we from such to Thee, whose nobler art
Rivets the eye, and penetrates the heart ;
To Thee whom nature, in thy earliest youth,
Fed with the honey of eternal truth ;
Then, by her fondling art, in happy hour,
Enticed to Learning's more sequester'd bower.
There, all thy life of honours first was plann'd,
While Nature preach'd, and Science held thy
hand.

When, but for these, condemn'd, perchance, to
trace

The tiresome vacuum of each senseless face,
Thou, in thy living tints, hadst ne'er combined
All grace of form, and energy of mind
How, but for these, should we have, trembling,
fled

The guilty tossings of a Beaufort's bed ;
Or let the fountain of our sorrows flow
At sight of famish'd Ugolino's woe ?

Bent on revenge, should we have pensive stood
O'er the pale cherubs of the fatal wood,
Caught the last perfume of their rosy breath,
And view'd them smiling at the stroke of death?
Should we have question'd, stung with rage and
 pain,
The spectre line, with the distracted Thane?
Or, with Alcmena's natural terror wild,
From the envenom'd serpent torn her child?

And must no more thy pure and classic page
Unfold its treasures to the rising age?
Nor from thy own Athenian temple pour,
On listening youth, of art the copious store;
Hold up to labour independent ease,
And teach ambition all the ways to please;
With ready hand neglected genius save,
Sickening, o'erlook'd in Misery's hidden cave:
And, nobly just, decide the active mind
Neither to soil nor climate is confined?

Desert not then thy sons, those sons who
 soon
Will mourn with me, and all their error own.

Thou must excuse that raging fire, the same
Which lights their daily course to endless fame ;
Alas ! impels them, thoughtless, far to stray
From filial love, and Reason's sober way.
Accept again thy power, resume the chair,
“ Nor leave it, till thou place an Equal there.”

S O N G.

1843

S O N G.

OH fling away that foolish flower,
 Spoiling the perfume of a breast
That wants no scent of meaner power,
 To make its sweetness be confess'd.

From the Spice Isles, delicious gales
 (Long after land is lost to view)
With odours fill the swelling sails,
 And many a league the bark pursue.

Thy fragrance, thus, when from thee torn,
 On magic wing pursues my way ;
Still, in each gale, thy breath is born,
 And absence steals not all away.

Thy form still glides before my eyes,
 I almost press thee to my heart,

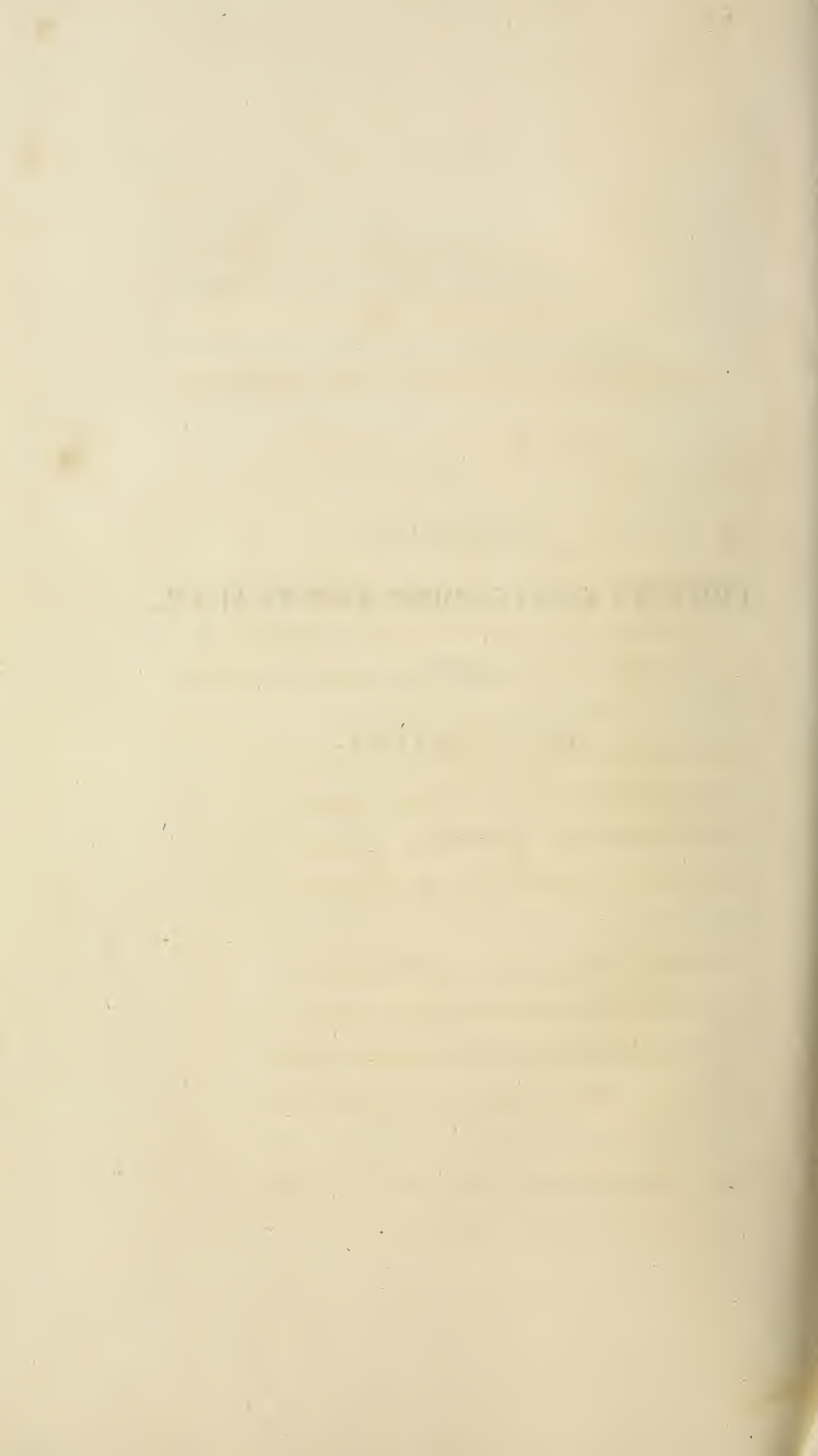
If I entreat, thy voice replies——

Fancy, such joys can still impart.

'Tis thus you cheer my melancholy way;

And cruel absence steals not all away.

ON
OCCASION OF A
FRIEND'S CONTENDING FOR BEAUTY,
AND
BEAUTY ALONE.



ON OCCASION OF A

FRIEND'S CONTENDING FOR BEAUTY,
AND BEAUTY ALONE.

A NOISY, laughing Cupid, I detest;
Give me the Boy with look intent,
Big with grave care, as though he meant
Some mighty work, when he besieged my breast.

Not, that a whining love has charms for me;
Yet there's a tenderness that wears
A serious robe, and drinks the tears
Soft gushing from the eye of Sympathy.

The charitable gift, the pitying hand,
The soul that melts at sight of woe,
Strike on the breast the hardest blow,
And join esteem to Passion's looser band.

Hence true affection, hence refined desire
Feel their full right to nobler joy,

To bliss that is too dear to cloy,
For it is purified by Reason's fire.

Lovely thy nymph ! but will she e'er incline
O'er the sick bed, or sorrow's chair ?
O ! light and giddy, would she bear
One sober flower in Pleasure's wreath to twine !

If, by the moon, through silent groves ye go,
Midst scenes which Nature forms for love,
Where does her restless fancy rove ?
To riot, fashion, and the public show.

If, on the roaring beach ye take your way,
Fears she, for foundering barks, the storm ?
O no ! she sighs, so fair a form
Is not reflected in so rude a sea.

But is there one, would joy with thee to seek
The widow's shed, the labourer's door,
Forget her lover for the poor,
Nor know thou'rt near, when age and sickness
speak ?

Should'st thou officious point the lucky aid,
Quick draw thee to her generous breast
With firmer clasp; then, if possess'd
Of worlds,—those worlds should at her feet be
laid.

Such is the Fair that claims my friend's pursuit:
Leave *perfect charms* to others' choice,
Attend no more to Passion's voice,
But gather thus from love its sweetest fruit.

Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst. in relation to the above mentioned matter. I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the investigation. I have, however, no objection to your making such use of the facts as you may think proper.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. M. Smith

NAWORTH CASTLE ;

A

FRAGMENT.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

NAWORTH CASTLE;*

A FRAGMENT.

O NAWORTH, monument of rudest times,
When Science slept intomb'd, and o'er the waste,
The heath-grown crag, and quivering moss, of old
Stalk'd unremitted war! The call for blood
A herd purloin'd, perchance a ravaged flock;
For this, how often have thy dungeons, caves
Of sad despair, been fed with those, whose hands,
More fit to wield the scythe or spade, uprear'd
The enormous pike. While all, in iron clad,
As plunder tempted or their chieftain led,
Join'd the fierce rout of predatory force,
Making our Border tremble. Ah, how oft
These oaks, that fling their leafless arms so high,
And warn the traveller erring from his way,
(Best office of their age) have pitying heard
The veteran's dying groan; beheld him dragg'd
To an unworthy death, and mark'd the voice

* In Cumberland.

That, to a long descent, and distant time,
Left the dire legacy of deep revenge.
If, on yon mountain's slippery ridge, where once,
From man's annoyance safe, the wild stag browsed,
Lord of this heathy world ; and where the eagle
Defied the invader of his rocky bed ;
Now, the plantation, gay with different tints,
Drives its new shadow o'er the wondering lake ;
If now, the waving corn has dared to hide
Within its yellow breast, the proud remains
Of Roman toil, magnificence, and power ;*
If now, the peasant, scared no more at eve
By distant beacons, and compell'd to house
His trembling flocks, his children, and his all,
Beneath one crazy roof, securely sleeps ;
Yet all around thee is not changed ; thy towers,
Unmodernized by tasteless Art, remain
Still unsubdued by Time——

* The Roman wall.

LINES

FOUND WRITTEN UPON A WINDOW

AT CALAIS.

SAVING

THE WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE

AT ALL TIMES

LINES

FOUND WRITTEN UPON A WINDOW

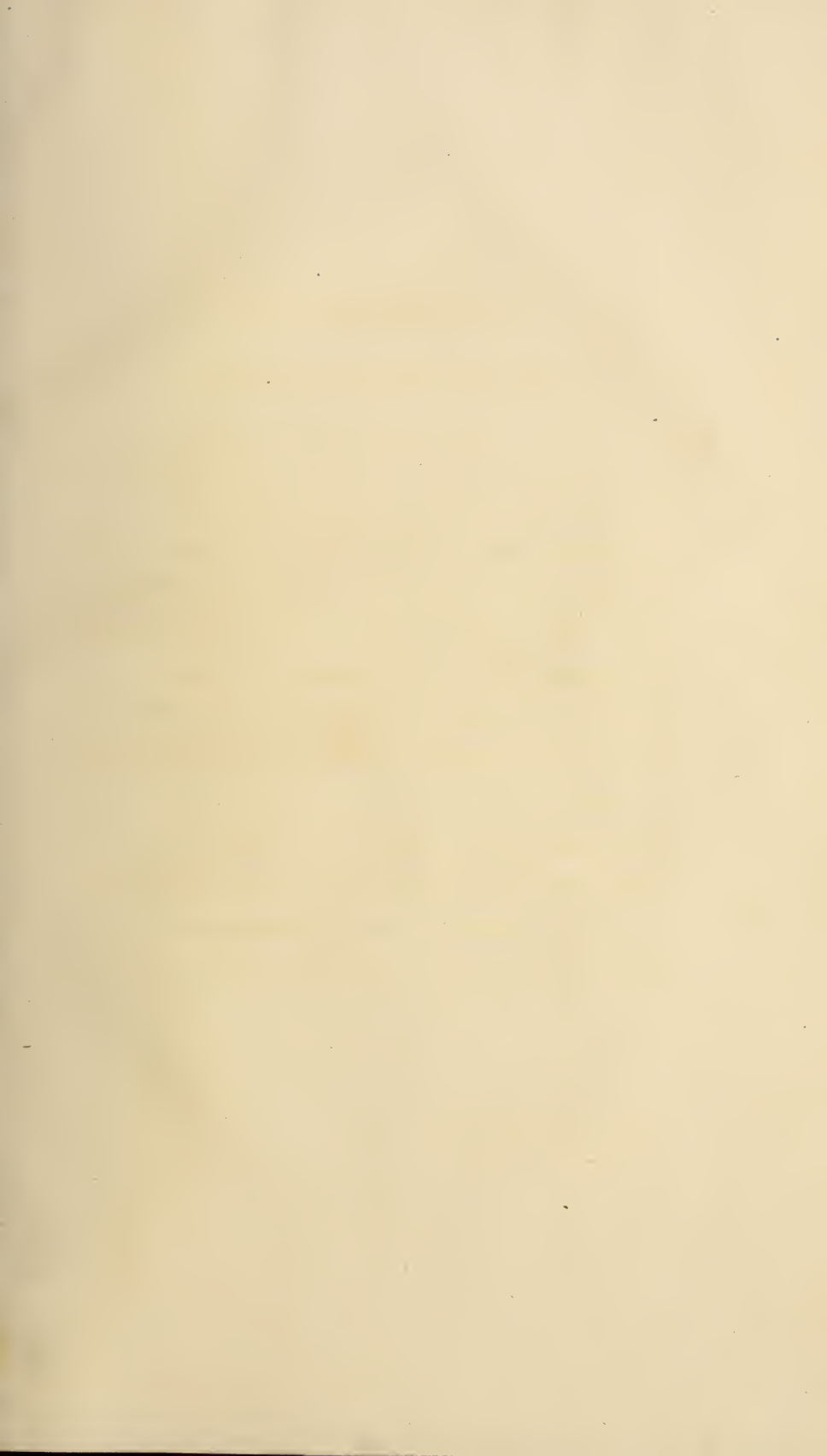
AT CALAIS.

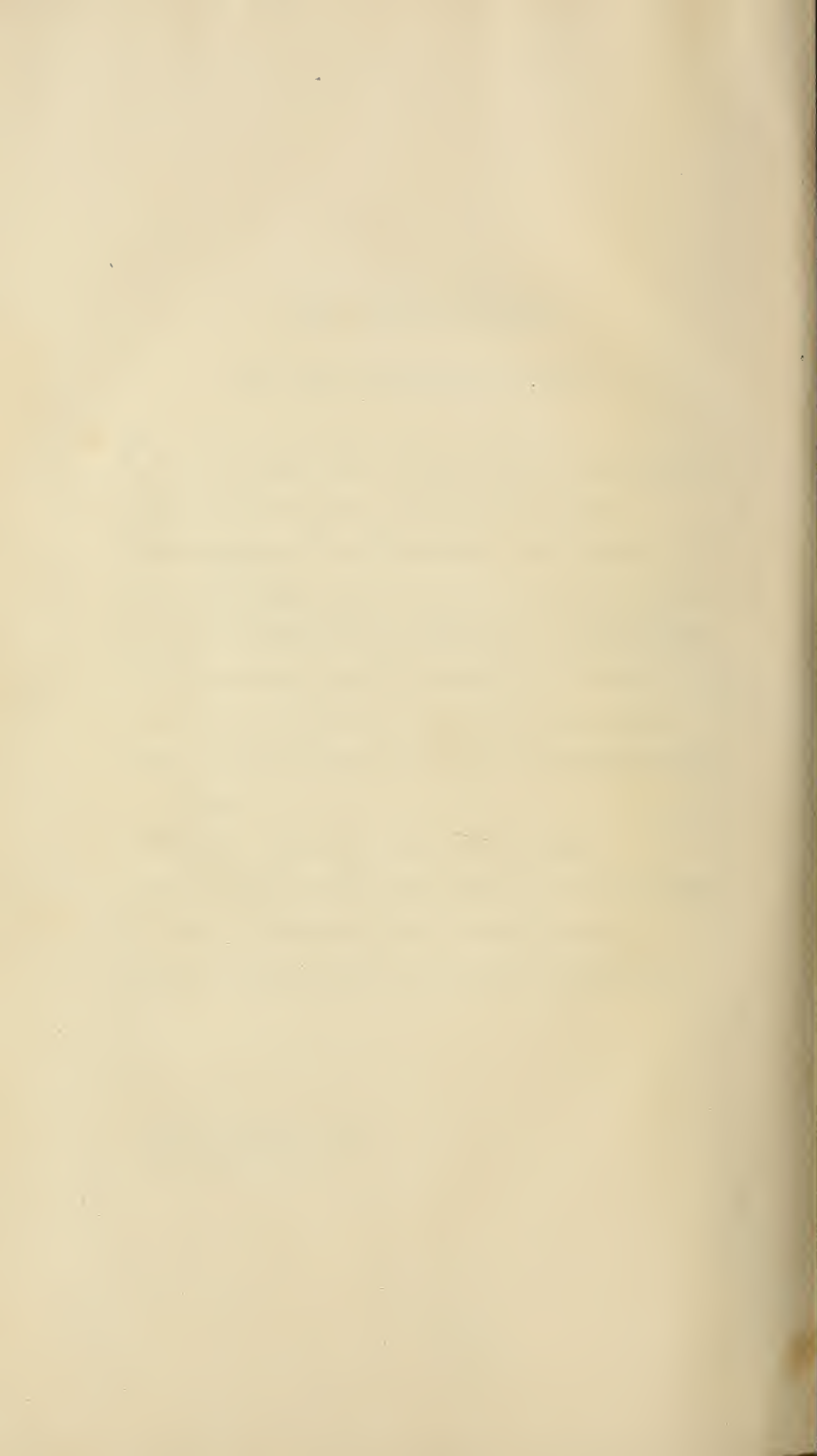
EURE veni, tua jamdudum exoptata morantur
Flamina : te poscit votis precibusque Viator
Impatiens, qui longa moræ fastidia sentit.
Interea ad curvas descendens sæpiùs oras,
Prospicit in patriam, atque avidis exhaurit ocellis.
Illic Dubrenses ad cœlum ascendere colles
Aspicit, excelsasque arces, grandesque ruinas,
Et latè ingentes scopulorum albescere tractus ;
Nequicquam videt hæc, nec fas attingere visa,
Obstat Hyems inimica, et vis contraria venti.

TRANSLATION

OF THE FOREGOING LINES.

COME, Eurus, come ; long, long hast thou delay'd
Thy friendly succour, and propitious aid.
The impatient Traveller at thy altar bows,
Sick with delay, pours forth his ceaseless vows ;
Who, here detain'd, oft seeks the winding shore,
With straining eyes his country to devour ;
Sees Dover's height the dashing waves defy,
Rear its broad breast, and meet the neighbouring
sky ;
Its mighty bastions to his view expand,
Long length of walls, and towers, and chalky land.
In vain on these he casts his longing eyes,
Fierce Winter howls, and adverse winds arise.





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